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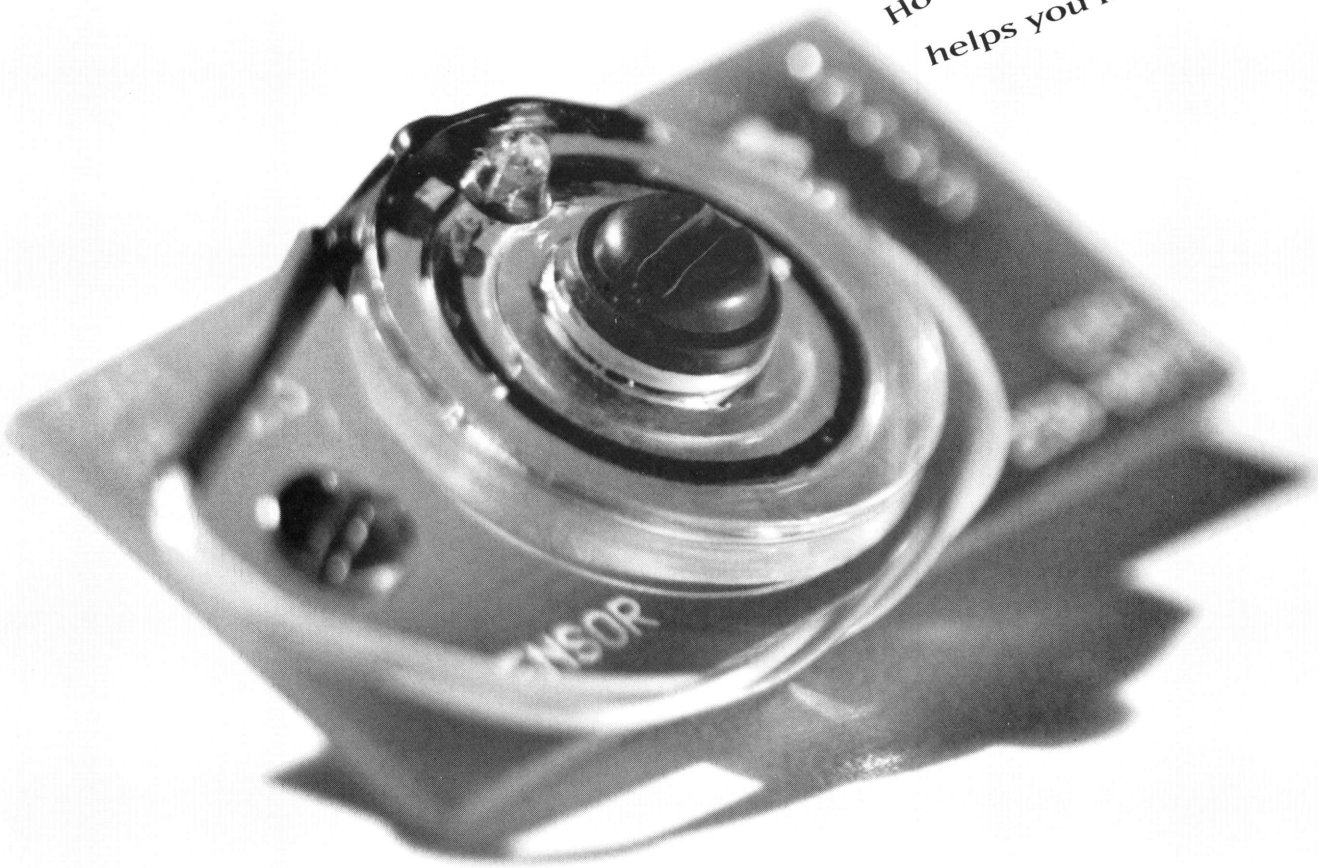

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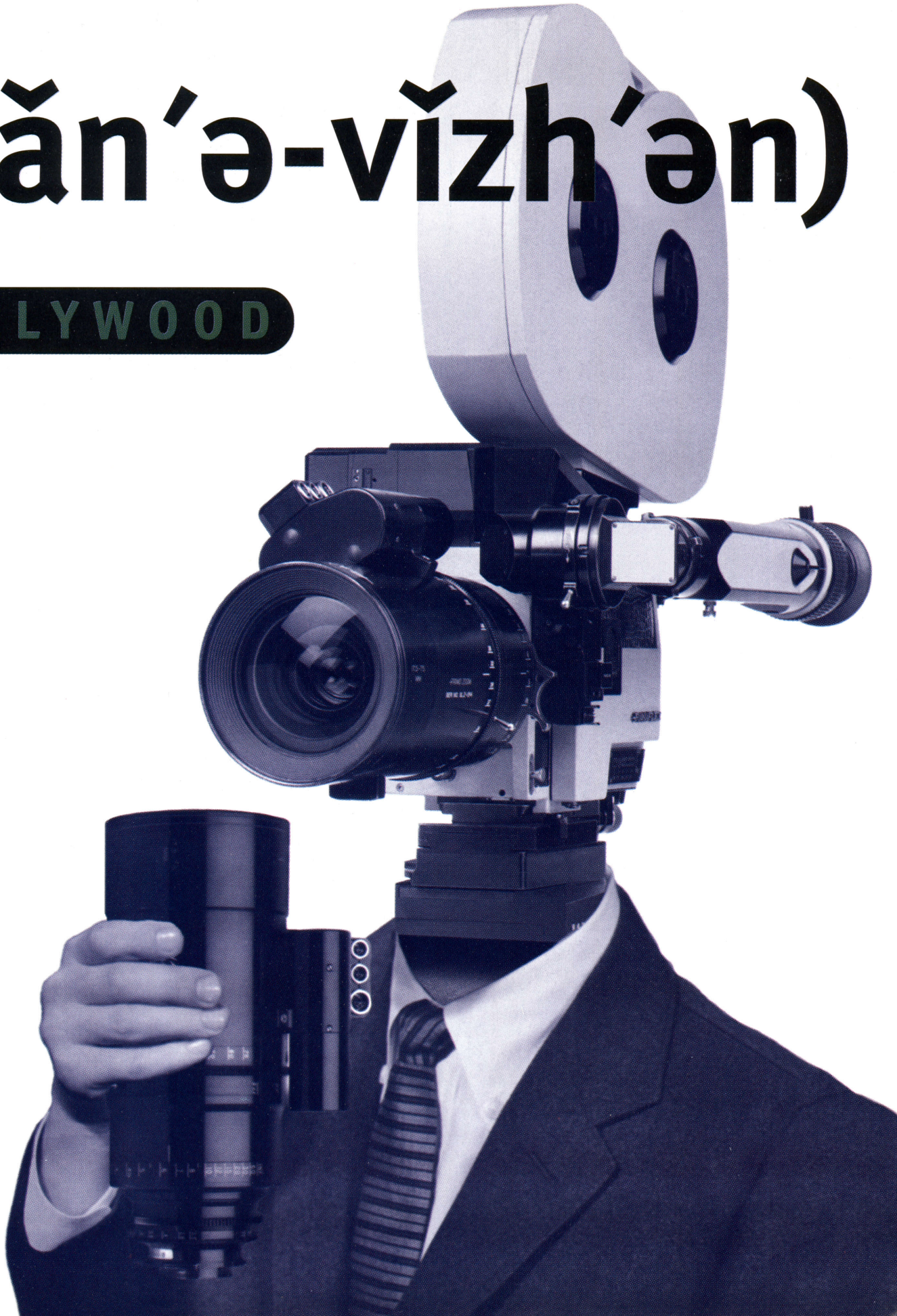

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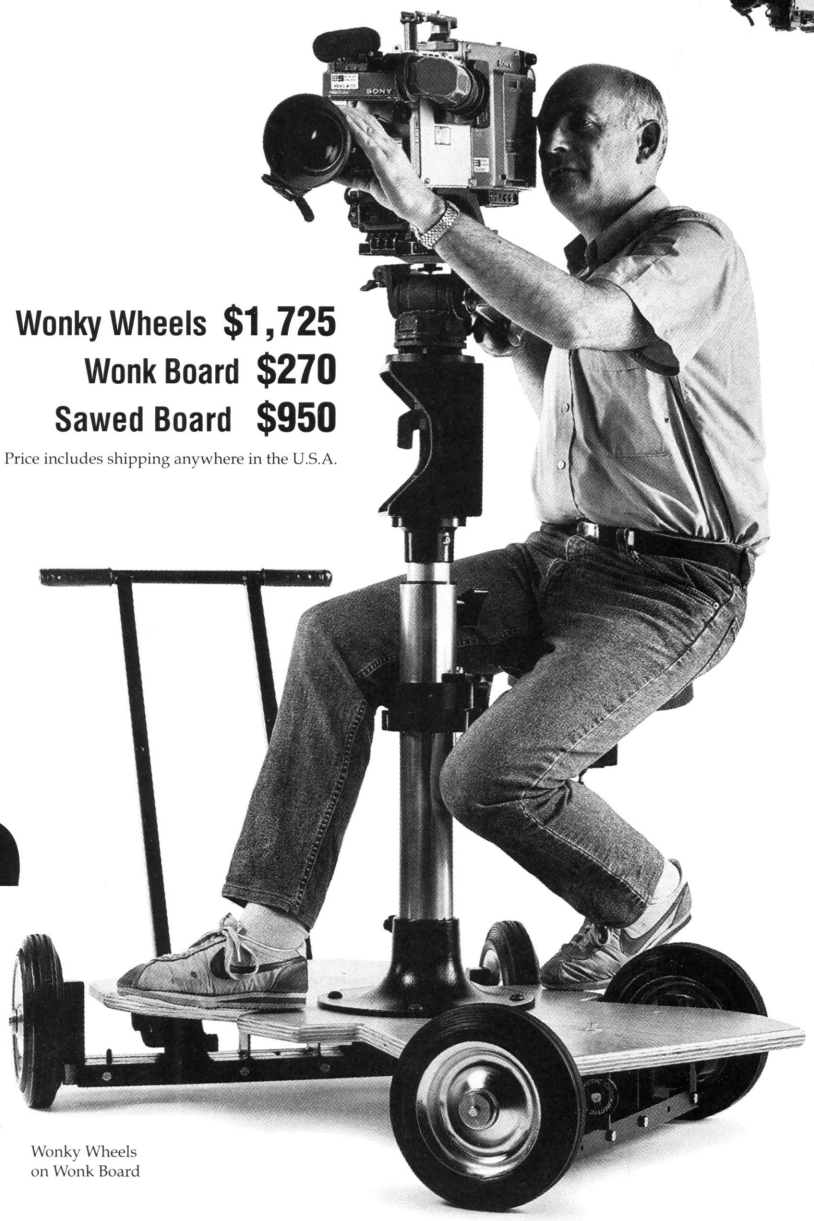

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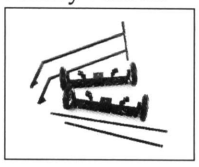

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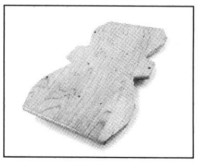

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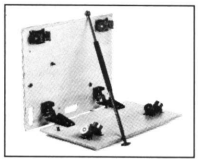

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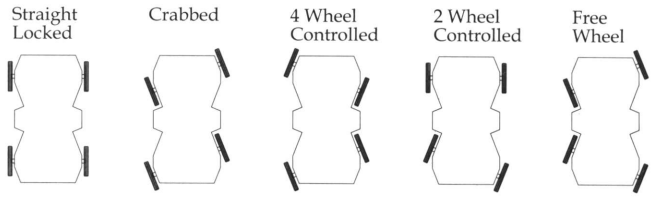

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November 1996 Vol. 77 No. 11

American Cinematographer

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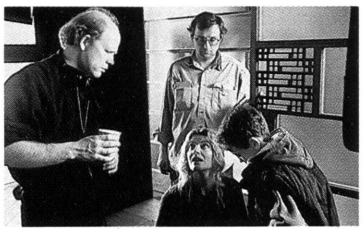

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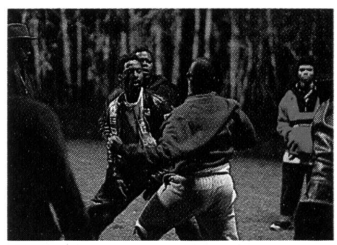

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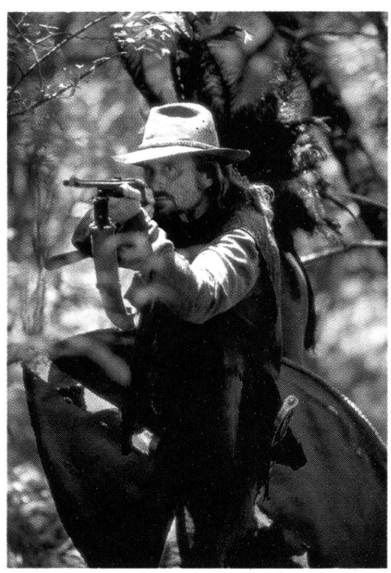

On Our Cover: A big-game hunter (Michael Douglas) on the trail of predatory lions takes aim at his prey in *The Ghost and the Darkness,* directed by Stephen Hopkins and photographed by Vilmos Zsigmond, ASC (photo by Frank Connor, courtesy of Paramount Pictures).

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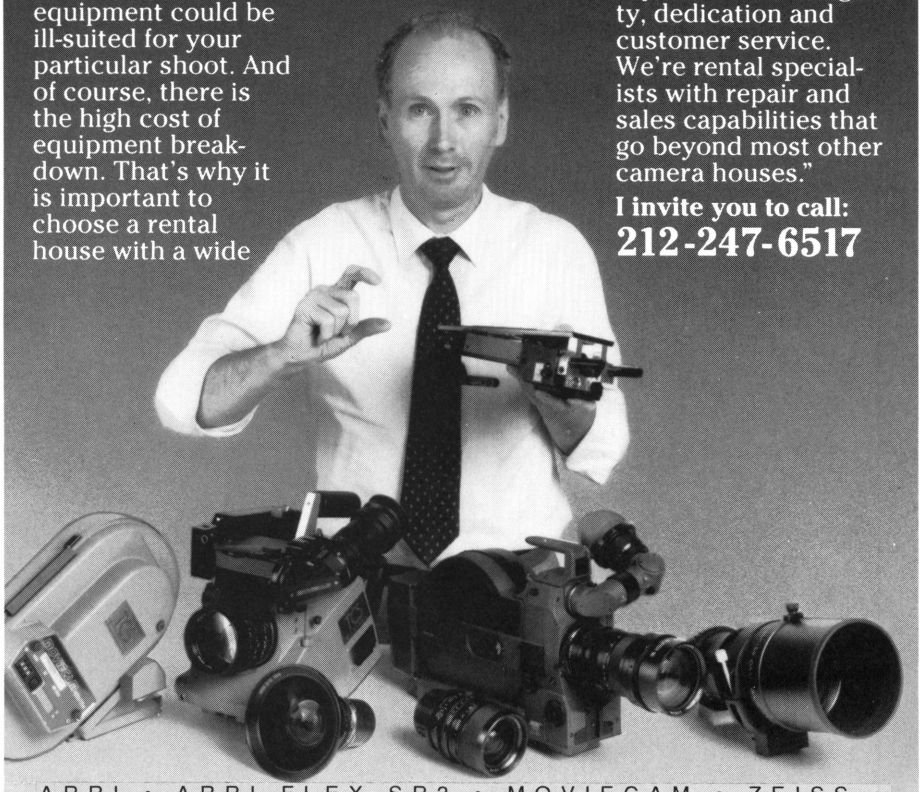

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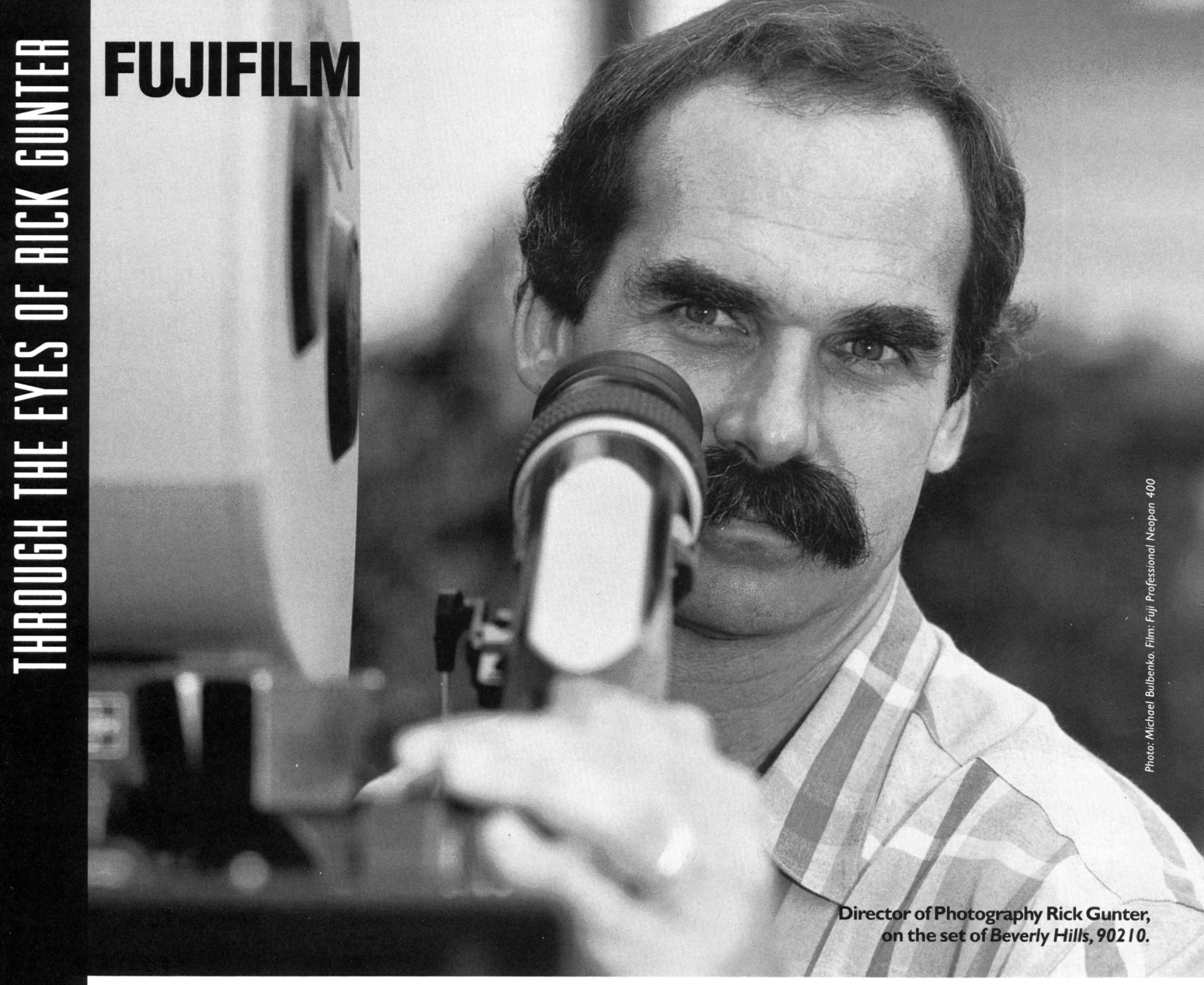

Photo: Michael Bulbenko. Film: Fuji Professional Neopan 400

Director of Photography Rick Gunter,
on the set of *Beverly Hills, 90210.*

WHAT FILM DOES DP RICK GUNTER DEPEND ON

to capture the range of mood and texture required for an episode of *Beverly Hills, 90210?*

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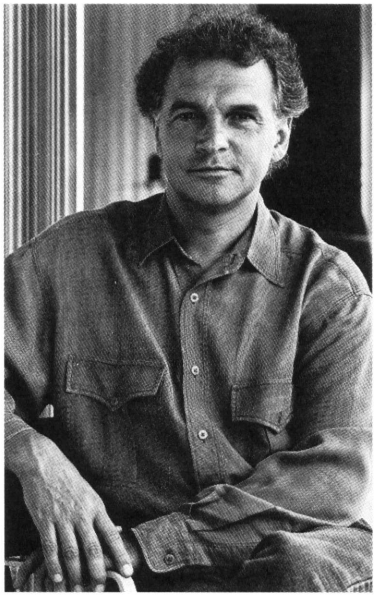
Theo Van de Sande ASC shot A/B comparison test footage with six types of anamorphic lens. Here is what he found:



"Of the thirty-six features I've worked on as DP, three have been anamorphic," says Theo Van de Sande. "The latest anamorphic film is *Bushwhacked*, a Fox release."

Lens shortage

"For about five years, there has been a shortage of anamorphic lenses. And new ones have been coming out–Arriscopes and Clairmonts, the Angenieux and Cooke zooms anamorphed by Clairmont. So I decided to shoot some tests. It's useful to know what the various alternatives are, how they perform."

Headlights

"I remember a night exterior in which a series of approaching headlights on high beam shone directly into the anamorphic lens. It was a wrong-way chase scene, the camera car weaving between oncoming traffic. As each set of headlights came at us, the flare created linear streaks right across the frame. The Director loved it–a more aggressive effect than the concentric flare rings you'd get with sphericals."

"For that shot, streaks had worked. For most, they probably wouldn't. To compare the six available types of anamorphic lens, I set up a point-source star test. Projecting the test footage, it was clear that the Arriscopes produced no streaking at any stop. Wide open, the Cooke 40-400mm showed a small amount. So did Clairmont's own anamorphic lenses, but less than the lens types I had shot the high-beam headlights with. Two stops down, there was virtually no difference in streaking among any of them."

Star Test

"Soon after that test, I made some long shots at dusk of a huge oil refinery, lit by hundreds of extremely bright lights, much hotter than the ambient daylight. The refinery was too big to balance, but streaks from all those point sources would have looked very strange. In fact, I used Arriscopes and there were no streaks."

A/B Test

"Stopping down cures streaking but not distortion or breathing, of course. To test for those, I shot A/B footage, again with the five types of anamorphic fixed lens and with the Cooke 5 to 1 anamorphed by Clairmont. I also projection-tested five of the six and put them on the bench at two rental houses."

Zoom edge

"One surprise for me was that the Cooke showed no edge distortion at its wide end, despite being a zoom. At 40mm, the Cooke drew a straight line better than several of the 40mm fixed lenses, but not as good as the Arriscope 40mm."

Circles/Ovals

"The other surprise was that the Cooke didn't distort the center of the image when I racked

Theo Van de Sande's credits as Director of Photography include Once Around, Crossing Delancy, Miracle Mile, Wayne's World and The Assault, which won both a Golden Globe and a 1986 Academy Award for Best Foreign Film.

focus, despite being a modified spherical zoom! The only other lenses that *didn't* change image shapes in the center of the screen were the Arriscopes. With all the other fixed lenses I tested, a center-screen circle became an oval as it went out of focus. Some lenses made horizontal ovals, others made vertical ovals."

Distortion

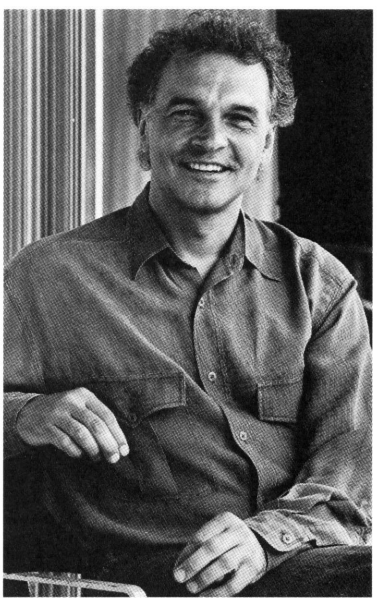
"Like the streaking, this center distortion was more pronounced in some of the fixed lenses. In two types, it was very noticeable. In two others (including the Clairmonts), it was less so. With the Cooke and the Arriscopes, I couldn't see it in the test footage. When I put the Arriscopes on the projector, I still couldn't see it."

Breathing

"The Arriscopes didn't distort, but they *did* breathe. Every lens does that to some degree, including every spherical–it's just more noticeable with some anamorphics. My test footage of focus changes on still subjects showed the Arriscopes changing image size more than any of the others."

Size or shape?

"But the Arriscopes were still my first choice. I was more bothered by test objects in center screen changing shape than by their changing size. I've found that whenever focus shifts substantially it's because the action moves or someone in the foreground turns around, that kind of thing. The movement masks the focus change and the size change–or it can be *made* to mask them."



Tradeoff?

"I suppose I'm used to seeing subtle size changes on screen–tracking and unobtrusive zooming. And in real life, things change size with distance. But they don't change *shape* in real life, or in center frame through sphericals. Arriscope circles got bigger, but they were still circles. If more breathing was their design tradeoff for no distortion, I think they made the right choice."

Orientable

"On *Bushwhacked*, our first unit had two Moviecam Compacts and an ARRI 3. Our second unit used two ARRI 3s all the time, sometimes as many as five. Clairmont ARRI 3s have bright, orientable anamorphic finders. That's one of the three reasons I went with Clairmont once again: their expertise with Arriflex and Moviecam and now with anamorphic."

Availability

"My second reason was the lens choice and lens availability (not the same thing) at Clairmont. There's a big selection there, including some zooms and long anamorphics you can't find anywhere else. And they had enough of them to equip all our cameras. And if they said we could have a certain lens, I knew we'd get it."

Choices

"Their anamorphic Angenieux 10 to 1 was excellent, even wide open. From T4 on down, the Clairmont anamorphics gave us Steadicam shots as sharp as our Arriscope footage. Not quite as distortion-free, but they cost us about half as much to rent and they weighed four or five times less."

Discuss

"My third reason for going with Clairmont, then and now," says Mr. Van de Sande, "Is that I can discuss things with Denny and Terry *as filmmakers*."

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Letters

70mm of Substance

Thank you to Rick Mitchell of Los Angeles for answering my previous query about anamorphic/70mm shows on video/TV [Letters, *AC* August 1996]. Yes, Mr. Mitchell, I do feel cheated in not getting the full picture on video.

What is the reason behind so many action directors now shooting in Super 35 rather than 65mm, aside from the nimbleness of camera operation? From what I've read in *AC*, Super 35 produces a negative with a reduced image area that would result in an inferior blow-up to 70mm, which many of these action pictures are subjected to.

I understand that flexibility is the key to shooting action, but surely having the larger negative with the dramatic improvement in clarity, color and resolution has an advantage over standard 35mm. Anamorphic prints will be struck anyway, for cinemas that aren't set up for 70mm, so why not start with a breathtaking negative rather than having to make a blow-up from a lesser one?

Given the budgets of these pictures (though most of which is for the actors), they can certainly afford to pay the little extra bit for lighting, film stock and camera that would make a dynamic difference in the audience experience. I'm getting really tired of waiting for a reissue of a Sixties-era print of a 70mm show to see a film made by people who really used the medium. Today's filmmakers have, at their fingertips, control over more money, people and technology than ever before, so why are the new 65mm cameras languishing on the shelves?

— Roger Brown
Gibbons, British Columbia
Canada

65mm of Separation

I very much appreciated the extremely informative letter on film preservation by Robert A. Harris and James C. Katz. [Letters, *AC* Sept. '96]. There really isn't a problem in tooling sprockets for 55mm or building any kind of optical printer since a competent optical house can do just about anything. Plenty of these people are around Los Angeles.

The best way to preserve any film is to make black-and-white separations of the original camera negative. This could be easily be done with 65mm. Although I don't believe Eastman Kodak ever made 65mm black-and-white film, might an optical printer be built to make separations of 65mm color negative in [35mm, horizontally running] VistaVision? The VistaVision negative is large enough to hold any aspect ratio. There would be little cupping problems and they could easily be printed back to 65mm.

— Richard Bennetts
Cottonwood, California

ISC Inauguration

The newly formed Indian Society of Cinematographers would like to contact similar societies in other countries for exchange of ideas of mutual interest for the advancement of cinematography.

Address correspondence to: Indian Society of Cinematographers, "Nirmal Sadan," T.C. 31/916, Pettah, Thiruvananthapuram - 695 024, Kerala, India.

— K. Ramachandra Babu
President, ISC
Kerala, India

Errata:

The name of Vietnamese filmmaker Tran Anh-Hung was misspelled in "Vicious Cycle" (*AC* August '96), Andrew O. Thompson's article on *Cyclo*. *AC*'s editorial staff regrets the error and apologizes for any inconvenience it may have caused the director.

In a caption to "Blue Chips Stocks" (*AC* Aug. '96, p.70), Bob Fisher's article on Kodak's new Vision emulsions, *NYPD Blue* actor Michael DeLuise was misidentified as Jimmy Smits. *AC's* caption writers will have considerable time to contemplate their gaffe while serving 5 to 10 on Riker's Island. ◆

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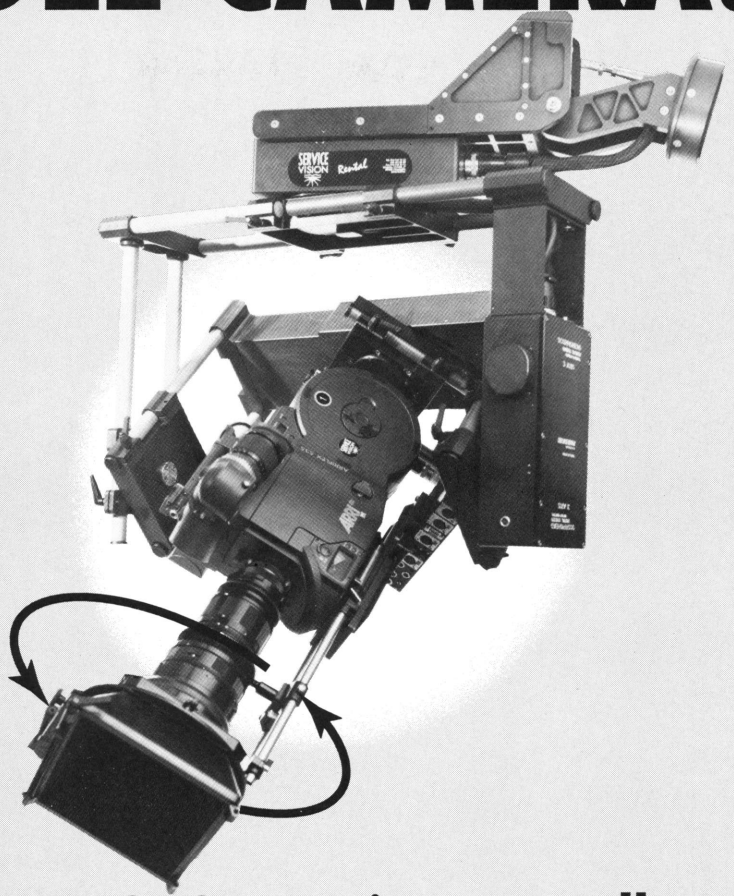

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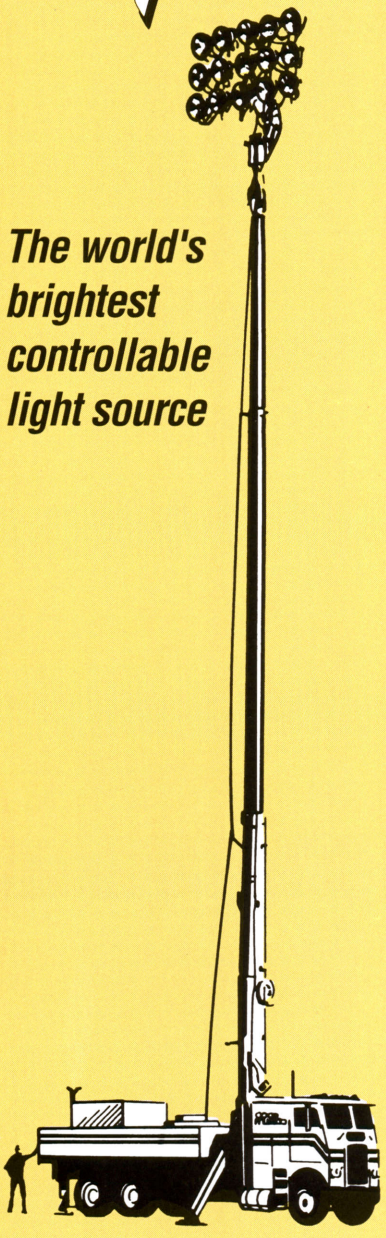
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FrameStore: From Post House to Visual Effects Facility

by Debra Kaufman

When FrameStore won an Emmy on September 7 for creating the digital effects in the miniseries *Gulliver's Travels*, the triumph brought home the fact that this one-time postproduction house has a new identity as a visual effects facility. Though the London-based company has actually been creating digital visual effects for a few years now, FrameStore joint-CEO William Sargent notes that *Gulliver's Travels* has given the outfit a high profile in Hollywood. For that project, which aired on NBC during sweeps week, the firm completed 450 shots in 16 weeks, delivering the job three days ahead of schedule.

Winning the Emmy isn't the only big news at FrameStore. The company recently celebrated its 10th anniversary and, on July 29, went public, merging with Megalomedia P.L.C. via an exchange of cash and stock. Megalomedia is a corporate entity consisting of advertising giants Maurice and Charles Saatchi, Adidas chairman/CEO Robert Dreyfus, Jakob Rothschild, Atlantic Records president Ahmet Ertegun, and Rolling Stones frontman Mick Jagger. Prior to forming Megalomedia, this same group had owned approximately one-third of FrameStore since 1990, a fact that was not known publicly.

To fully comprehend why FrameStore went public is to understand its founders' vision of the digital future. Though its most recent evolution has been from post house to "visual imaging studio" (as Sargent says the company now defines itself), the ambition of its founders was always to work on film projects.

Consistent with that aspiration, FrameStore began in the field of video opticals. In 1986, it had the first Quantel Harry site in London. Along with Sargent, joint-CEO Sharon Reed and production manager Alison Turner, two of the company's founders were Paintbox artists, Mike McGee and Jonathan Hills. To them, the Harry was the perfect tool for performing opticals and, along with Charlex in New York, they became pioneers in using the system to create multilayered graphic images for commercials and music videos.

But FrameStore's management soon discovered that though they were capturing many high-end jobs, other tasks were going to post houses which could package graphics with editing and telecine. As a defensive move, they added D-1 digital editing suites in 1990, which also streamlined work on the Harry, and, in 1992, telecine.

"We built the company block by block, dependent on having the talent," explains Sargent. "We only opened the edit suites when we could have the top two editors, and the telecine suite when we could have the top colorist."

FrameStore also expanded geographically. In 1989, a Barcelona facility was opened with the local production company O Video. For a few years, the strategy focused on continuing the geographic expansion, with planned sites in Germany and Italy. But, in light of what management believed was a coming recession, the firm's strategy was changed to consolidate resources in London so that the company could become "a global player."

A step in that direction took place in 1992, when FrameStore acquired another important capability: computer-generated imagery with Softimage on SGI platforms. "We always liked the idea of [adding] CGI, but up until 1992 the existing software required teams of programmers," says Sargent. "We didn't want to go into CGI if we had to have that relentless R&D expenditure. We were in the business of buying tools and having top

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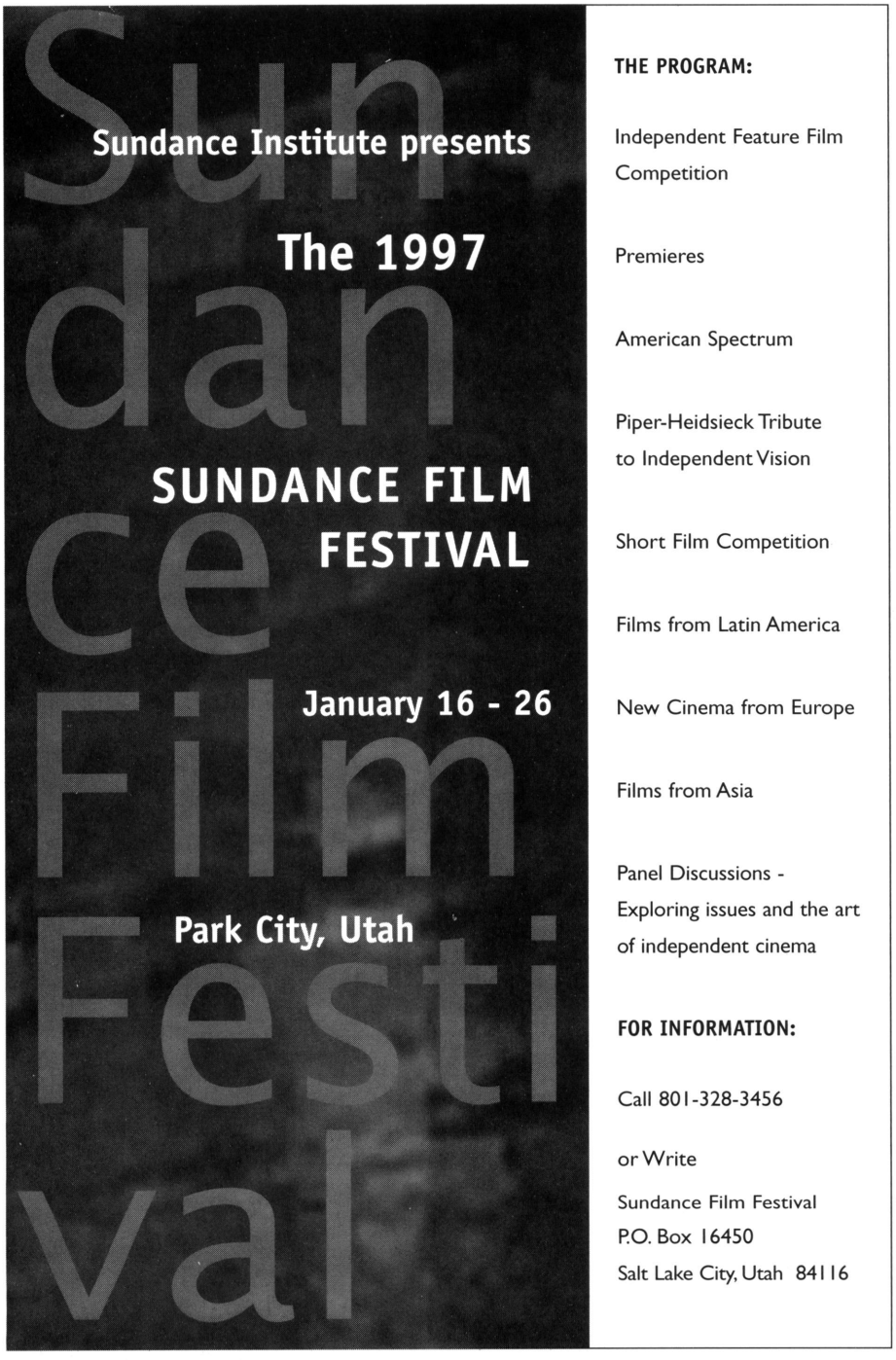

talent, not having to create those tools."

The same concept held true for digital effects for films, which had been a company goal ever since the founding of FrameStore. The strategy, says Sargent, was once again to wait for the tools to arrive. That wait was over in 1994 when FrameStore added a Quantel Domino and a Discreet Logic Flame to its arsenal. The first job was compositing, wire removal, matte paintings and various other digital effects tasks for the British film *Haunted*. The title sequence for the James Bond film *GoldenEye* soon followed. Most recently, FrameStore provided digital effects for *Pinocchio* and *Michael Collins*.

The need to evolve from post house to visual imaging studio was what fueled the move to go public. Sargent reports that his company faced the option of "going on our own or going with a corporate entity." The decision was wedded to the bottom line. "We didn't want to grow the business by draining one business of its profit to start new businesses," he explains. "It's terribly important to retain your capital strength. All of that led us to feel that we should be a publicly held company. The idea was to put the [backers'] various investments together with FrameStore to exploit the digital world and its opportunities."

In this realm, FrameStore and other visual effects houses see opportunities in their ability to create digital assets which can be re-purposed for feature films, television programs, CD-ROMs, ridefilms, videogames, and the Internet. But, unlike some effects companies with this stated intent, FrameStore draws the line at creating and owning intellectual properties. "We're more in the world of creating for a fee, but not taking the financial risk of owning it," says Sargent. "You need to be a studio to have a broad enough base of product."

As one who's been there, Sargent also notes that heroic efforts can be required to evolve a facility from a post house to a "visual imaging studio." He explains, "If you want to be a post facility that does effects, you have to prove yourself first. And even then, it doesn't necessarily mean that you can make that transition. There is a gray area [between post house and visual effects facility], but not everyone can cross it or will want to cross it." ◆

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Swingers' Director-Cinematographer Says "Make Mine a Double!"

by Brandon Wilson

Though such hyphenates as the writer-director and actor-director are becoming increasingly familiar breeds, the ranks of the director- cinematographer are curiously slim. With such notable exceptions as a youthful Stanley Kubrick, Nicholas Roeg, and Peter Hyams, the division of labor between the two remains one of the rarely crossed lines of moviemaking. But joining these slim ranks is newcomer Doug Liman, who recently directed and photographed *Swingers*, an independent film set in the treacherously hip lounge circuit of Los Angeles. Asked about the pros and cons of moving the director's chair behind the camera, Liman admits, "I was terrified that I was going to be torn between rehearsing my actors and working with the crew to set up the shot. But what I discovered on *Swingers* is that what comes to me naturally as a director is supported by what comes to me photographically. For me, shooting isn't all that technical. It's not about f-stops and charts, but about moving the camera, blocking the scenes out, and watching through the viewfinder, which is the best way of looking at a performance.

"That's as close as you're going to get to what people see in the theater, much more so than [the perspective offered by] a video monitor. And if you're just standing next to the camera, you're not seeing the frame. [The process] is incredibly organic if you can just focus on the creative aspects of cinematography — it also helps to have a great gaffer [Roderick Spencer] and great camera assistants [Lorna Leslie and Sabrina Merics]. So I never felt that I was shirking my responsibility in one area to focus on another."

A New York native, Liman began practicing his craft early on, having shot hundreds of Super 8 films since first picking up a camera at the age of eight. He then studied photography at New York's International Center of Photography, founded a student-run cable TV station at Brown University, and later enrolled in USC's graduate film program, an experience which clashed with the freedom Liman had found on his homemade productions. He explains, "When you make Super 8 movies, you're shooting them yourself. At USC, I learned how to work with a director of photography, and somehow it never seemed natural to me. I felt that I should be behind the camera, as that's how I'd always been making movies. It was like being asked to direct with one hand tied behind my back."

Photos by Jim Towne, courtesy of Miramax Films.

Above top left: ***Down-on-his-luck actor Mike (Jon Favreau) tries his hand at being a Casanova so as to charm the demure Lorraine (Heather Graham). This scene, along with many other interiors set in the haunts of L.A.'s hipsters, was shot with practical illumination during actual business hours.*** **Above:** ***A vanguard of swingers surveys the talent at the obligatory Hollywood Hills house party.***

After being brought on board to direct Jon Favreau's hilarious script for *Swingers*, Liman convinced producers Victor Simpkins and Nicole Shay LaLoggia that a smaller production would make for a more creative environment. In keeping with that philosophy, the budget was left in the $200,000 range, rather than the million dollars the pair of producers had their sights set upon; Liman then signed up as director of photography (and camera operator) after interviews with prospective cinematographers yielded no ideal collaborators.

Liman served double duty during the 22-day schedule without major incident, a feat which he also credits to his crew, camera (an Aaton 35-III), film stock (Kodak 5298), and lab (Deluxe). The shoot itself revolved around his core philosophy: that the performances were the most important facet of the production, and everything else had to move in support of them. Liman lavishes much praise on the compact Aaton 35-III camera, which fit in perfectly with the director-cinematographer's low-tech/high-result doctrine. Remarks the filmmaker, "When you have a camera this small, you don't need to tailor your shoot around the needs of the camera — the blocking supports the performance rather than the physical limitations of the camera. Why should an actor not be able to get up from a chair because the magazine on the back of the camera sticks out two feet? It's not a justified limitation for creatively limiting the performance or storytelling. [Using] the Aaton was like having an invisible camera. If I could imagine the shot in my head, the Aaton let me get it with minimal fuss."

Liman's lighting strategy also

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reflected this less-is-more aesthetic: "I used minimal lighting to support the idea of not having any limitations on the actors. I wanted them to feel as if they could go anywhere, so I lit with practicals and/or natural light. There was never any no-man's-land where they couldn't go, especially since we shot on location and there was no edge on the set; they could walk anywhere they wanted. I also wanted to shoot with practicals so the actors wouldn't be limited by lighting equipment on the edge of the frame."

For supplemental use, and in case of emergencies, Liman did have an entire lighting package on hand. When not employing practicals, he relied largely upon Chinese lanterns and Kino Flos, both of which were as mobile as the compact French-built camera. This need for portability also led him to improvise on the lighting for a particular party scene. "I used quartz halogen lights, the kind of bulb you can buy at any hardware store," he recalls. "I had a lot of zip cords and a bunch of sockets and we ran those everywhere. That way, I could light for every direction without having to move the lights around. We threw a real party for that scene, so the equipment had to be party-proof — we were only guaranteed two hours of peak party time for an eight-page scene. The party had to be prelit so the minute it got swinging, we could turn the camera on and go."

As much of *Swingers* was shot documentary-style in the swirl of the L.A. club scene during its regular business hours, Liman required a fast film stock with a wide latitude. He chose the 5298, which had proved adept on a prior shoot in a basement with only a few practical lights. Rating the 500 ASA stock at 600 and 750, Liman was able to shoot inside clubs such as the Derby in the L.A. suburb of Los Feliz, including one daring reproduction of the legendary Copacabana tracking shot from *GoodFellas,* entirely using practicals without pulling the f-stop. The director-cameraman explains, "A place like the Derby is really dark. If you rated the film stock at 2000, your meter would still show an error. *The Usual Suspects* [was an inspiration] because the cinematographer [Newton Thomas Sigel] always put something bright in the background of dark scenes. It's fine for my actors to be four stops underexposed because they're in a dark club. If you let the whole frame run four stop under, then you end up with this murky darkness. So you put one object in the frame that's correctly exposed, like a neon cocktail glass. Then, even if the actor's face is dark, there is something in the frame that is exposed correctly."

Liman says he has no compunction about doing double duty again. "Directing something you've written can be problematic. But I don't think being a cinematographer and a director is in that category; you need a director of photographer's objectivity to get what's best for the film up on the screen. If you can do both jobs, that's one less filter you're going through."

Czech Republic Provides Period Backdrop for *The Ring*

by Gideon Porath

The recently aired NBC miniseries *The Ring* (directed by Armand Mastroianni and executive-produced by Doug Cramer) chronicles the real-life tale of a German family torn apart by the rise of the Third Reich and the upheavals of the Second World War. Told from the point of view of the clan's daughter, Ariana (played by Nastassja Kinski), this period piece begins in 1930s pre-war Berlin and ends somewhat happily in 1970s New York City.

As the cinematographer on the project, I found that the visual possibilities offered to me by this production were wonderful, especially given its diverse 40-year period. Our visual impression of other eras is always very subjective. Even after all of the usual research and preparation — checking documentary footage or reading up on history — it might still be a postcard or black-and-white photograph that will help you connect with, define and create the style of the show. My feeling has always been that the search for a movie's style is cemented during prep. The weeks spent in a location van with a director, producer and production designer, going over the script and discussing the locations, are the most valuable. Ultimately, though, I prefer a location shoot because it puts everyone in an environment that is dedicated solely to the movie.

The Ring was largely shot on location in Europe. Principal photography began there in the fall of 1995 and later moved to New York City in December. Since most of Berlin was demolished by

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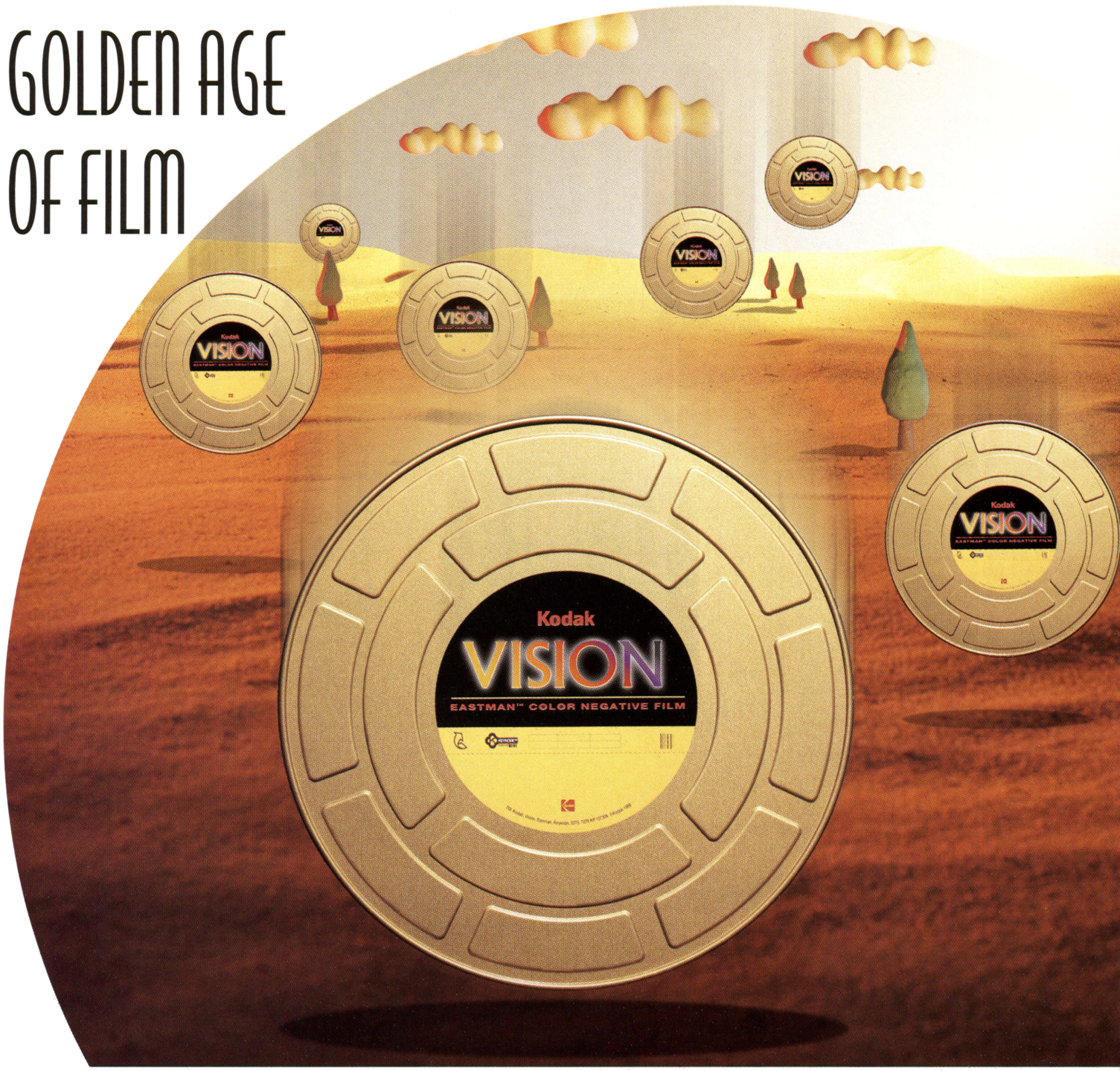

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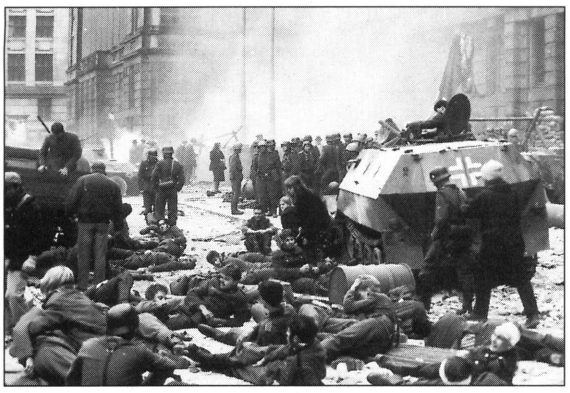


Above: ***The destruction of Berlin as set in Prague. Collectors of military and period equipment supplied the production with authentic vehicles. The Czech city also doubled as part of France for the scene in which Ariana flees from the Soviet advance.***
Right: ***Dancing with the devil in a ballroom scene set during the war. In addition to 10Ks coming through a Griffolyn above, lighting was provided by Kino Flo banks, China balls and follow-spots. Everything was rigged on a dimmer system, which darkened the brightly lit room as Hitler enters — followed by cold HMI shafts. At center, cinematographer Gideon Porath (in dark shirt) and director Armand Mastroianni confer while tuxedoed co-star Michael York (left, with notes) prepares for his role.***

the Allied bombings of 1945, the city would not serve for any of the pre-war segments. In addition, Germany is also a very expensive country to work in. The production instead went to Prague, the capital of the Czech Republic, which was quite lovely... until it got cold. The European weather worked for us and against us at the same time. Knowing that the climate would be getting progressively worse — while also being attentive to complex art department needs and actor availability — we shot the entire program virtually in sequence, with the exception of a few NYC scenes.

For a colder look that would accentuate the hardship and suffering of the time, my intention was to take full advantage of the often dark, gray skies. I chose to shoot *The Ring* on two Kodak stocks, 5298 and 5293, hoping to make use of the latter's fine grain for all of my day scenes. But around late November, when night was rapidly approaching by 4:00 p.m., I often found myself making that "Let's change to 98" gesture to the camera crew in a mad rush to capture the remaining light. In both daylight and magic-hour situations, I pushed both stocks to the limits and was again amazed by their latitude.

The stock proved excellent in one particular scene, set deep in the forest, when Ariana's father (played by Michael York) smuggles his son (English actor Rupert Penry-Jones) from Germany to Switzerland and then returns after nightfall. On the morning of the shoot, the huge construction crane I had requested for the night's filming got stuck in the mud near the dirt road location where we were going to work. It couldn't be leveled, and ended up causing a big delay. Instead of doing the scene during the day, we found ourselves shooting with a Steadicam very late in the afternoon; both Armand and I were encouraging each other that we would still have "a day scene." The meter, however, didn't register anything of substance — no comfort zone whatsoever. To the eye, the scene was dark, yet on film it looked magical; we started at a T5.6 but then ended up with nothing as the sun set.

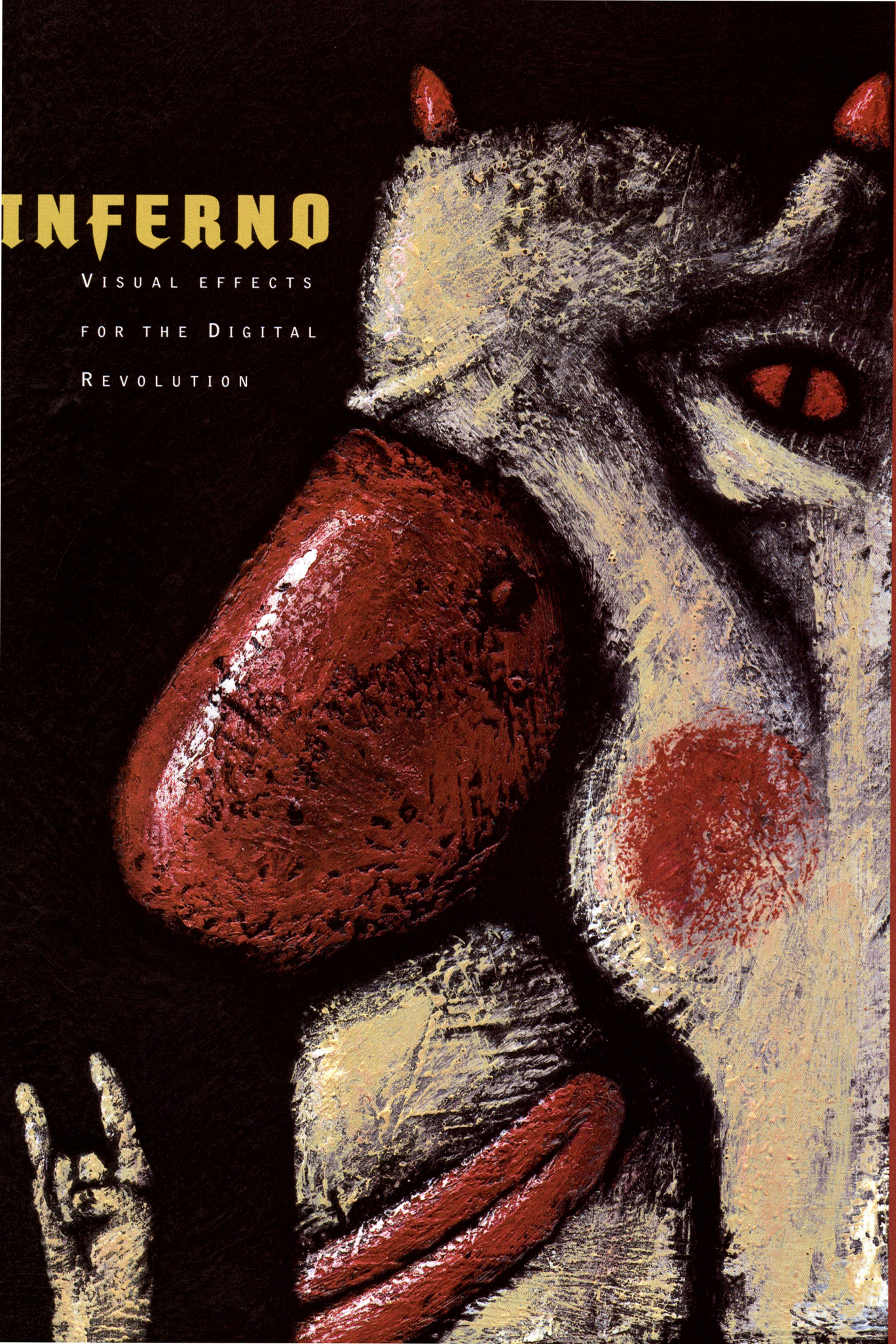
Normally, I do not put much in front of the lens, but throughout *The Ring* I augmented certain period and lighting situations with filters, using a mixture of Tiffen's Soft/FX, LL-D's, and Black Pro Mists. When later shooting our New York sequences, we added 85s to keep the atmosphere more hopeful in Ariana's new world.

The production used Primo primes and (both the 11:1 and lightweight 27-68mm zooms). The 11:1 is a great lens that offers tremendous flexibility for a price. Its minimum focus is four feet, so if you're going for a dramatic close-up with some background action, you simply have to use a prime. The lightweight zoom was used for the Steadicam, as the operator loved the lens for its size and weight; the assistants, however, hated it for its short barrel. Frank Perl and Dan Turett were my A-camera operators; Jerome Fouci operated Steadicam in Europe while Dave Knox did so in New York. Panavision supplied us with two Gold II cameras throughout the shoot; for the Prague shoot they were supplied by the London office (under Hugh Whitaker), and for domestic filming by the New York office (under Bob Harvey in Tarzana, with assistant Kent Miller). We had brought a lightweight Aaton 35 for use with the Steadicam. For some intense dramatic material indoors, we swapped the Aaton for a quieter Moviecam Compact.

The Steadicam *is* a wonderful tool and can be quite helpful on an ambitious TV schedule. Yet it's excruciating, to say the least, for a cinematographer to have to rely on a small Watchman monitor while shooting substantial night exterior scenes. The poor-quality video transmission is a never-ending source of frustration. More than once, I found myself running alongside an advancing Russian tank, covered in smoke and ducking explosions, while trying to peek at the operator's green screen. Another little kink in our system was that the European PAL video system is incompatible with all the NTSC Steadicam equipment that comes with an American operator. (I recently did a show in Toronto where we carried the Steadicam with a new Canatrans transmission system, so I know things are improving.)

In Prague, technical crews work via the English system, in which the grips are mainly crane and camera grips, while the gaffer and his crew set flags and cutters. The Czech crew was great, and we had several translators who made up for any missing links with hand signals and smiles. Since our schedule required big lighting setups for the huge ballroom, train station, immigration and refugee sequences, we ran a large rigging crew. The lighting gear came from Arri Munich, while Panther provided the grip equipment.

I was also introduced to some quite useful pieces of new equipment. For example, all the big HMIs (18K, 12K, 6K Pars) were run by flicker-free (and problem-free), dimmable ballasts. Due to the poor weather, there was never enough daylight, so interiors always had to be lit from the windows. Cherry-pickers were used extensively for these scenes. Lined one next to the other, they were far more flexible and maneuverable for light positioning than our regular Condors. We also made use of little baby cherry-pickers, which were developed for tight spaces such as the courtyards of the many castles where we



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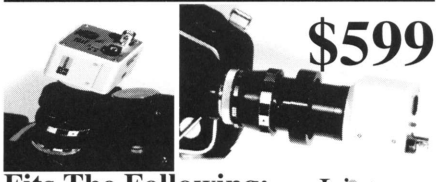

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shot. Those were towed — like little U-Haul trailers — placed in position, stabilized, and could still extend up to 60 feet with an 18K and lamp operator.

One major interior took place in a very large, beautifully decorated, Old World-style ballroom in which the German elite, graced by the presence of Hitler, dance in full denial of the advancing Allies. The room had a remarkable plate-glass ceiling, which we rigged for a backlit effect as part of the opening shot. However, as the workload was very heavy on that location, we planned to film the sequence backwards. The meat of the scene was done first, and then the opening shot. From the balcony, we bounced 10Ks into a 20' x 20' Griffolyn suspended with a pulley system from the delicate, plate-glass ceiling structure some 60 to 70 feet above. We used that as a general soft fill for the entire room. At the end of the day, we pulled the 10Ks back into the shadows of the balcony, lowered the Griffolyn to the ground and were ready for our opening shot within minutes.

We ended the Prague shoot in a blizzard, but were told that New York would greet us with fine weather. The cold front, however, got the habit of following us wherever we went. Two shooting situations that were affected by it stand out in my mind.

One scene was set at Christmas Eve in the early 1970s. The first shot had a taxi driving down Park Avenue, making a U-turn and stopping in front of our hero house. We were set up to see straight down the pike — the Christmas tree lights running all the way down to the Helmsley Cross, plus period vehicles for a couple of blocks. The shot included a crane to control the height and angle on the moving taxi so as to avoid any non-period intrusions. All of this was to be photographed at magic hour.

Because of an approaching storm, our production made a last-minute and very bold decision to flop the day and shoot the scene sunrise-for-sunset. The locations department arranged with the city to keep all the streetlights burning on though the night, while I requested some cross lights (for the snow, if it came) to be mounted on a large construction crane at the end of the block. The crew, led by gaffer Jonathan Lumley and key grip Tom Grunke, began rigging at 3:00 a.m. By the time we were set, the snow started coming down softly, the day broke, and we had a perfectly timed, great sunset shot.

The second weather-affected incident in NYC did not work in our favor. We were down at Battery Park late in the afternoon to film a very emotional scene. In it, actor John Tenney arrives by ship from Europe after the war is greeted by his parents, played by Linda Lavin and James B Sikking. It was supposed to be early summer, 1945 and the weather warm. Meanwhile, in real life, it was December and both the temperature and the light were dropping like crazy. Dave Knox was on the Steadicam and he too was having a rough time. The wind picked up, and there was a slight drizzle. But it was the last day of shooting, so we had to complete the work.

My heart was with the actors. The crew was totally bundled up, while the cast was in summer attire and had no refuge. It was so cold that they couldn't avoid shivering during the take. The color was gone from their cheeks and I fantasized that on screen their misery would be perceived as happiness for the reunion.

Months later, while going through final color correction, we had very weird skin tones to contend with in that scene. But Sunset Post in Los Angeles did an excellent job with the online sessions and helped us achieve the visuals for a film we all felt so strongly about.

Taking Flight for *The Crow: City of Angels*

Directed by Tim Pope and photographed by Jean Yves Escoffier (with additional contributions from cameramen Steven Poster, ASC and Gary Kibbe), *City of Angels* is an atmospheric sequel to the 1994 film *The Crow*, based on James O'Barr's graphic novel of the same title.

The first film became additionally notable due to the accidental on-set death of actor Brandon Lee.

While digital and miniature effects were extensively used to help expand the dark, brooding world ofthe first *Crow* film (set in decaying Detroit, designed by Alex McDowell and photographed by Dariusz Wolski, ASC), CG and scale models were utilized on *City of Angels* to an even greater extent under the guidance of visual effects supervisor Roger Dorney, who relied on Culver City-based Digiscope and Burbank-based Fantasy II to complete over 60 visuals for the

Sierra Dolly: This new lightweight dolly is designed for location work, but with metal construction that will support up to 600 lbs and stable enough to operate small jib arms. This 60 lbs doorway dolly features noiseless skate-board type track wheels that fit on either straight or curved track, round or square. On the floor, equipped with a 2-wheel steering mechanism, the Sierra's turning radius is 20" shorter than conventional doorway dollies.
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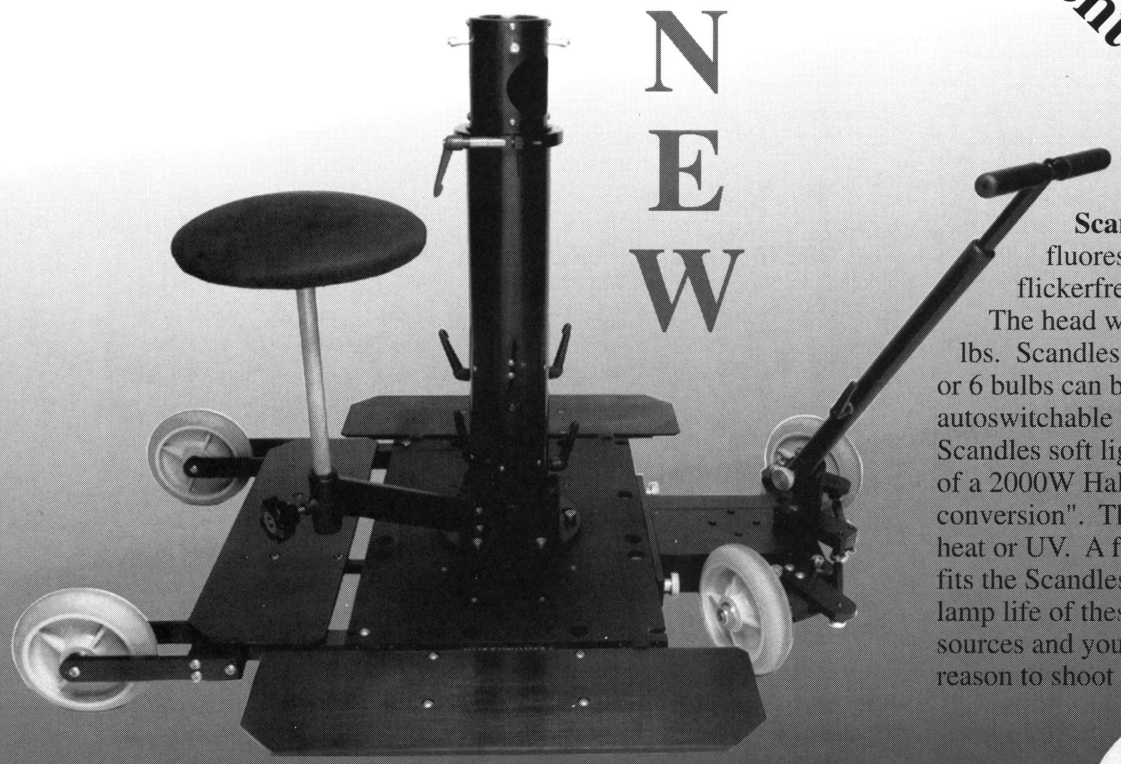

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highly stylized film.

Within the Gothic story, the titular bird embodies a spirit that revives people from the dead in order to avenge their untimely deaths. To visualize this, the filmmakers wanted to use their winged character in many sequences. However, several required the action of crows — which would be very difficult, if not impossible, to create working with live crows. Therefore, Digiscope's CG animation talent was utilized to conjure up the desired performances. Photorealistic motion of the crows was critical; if it wasn't correct, audiences would sense it on some level. Even more difficult, some shots would require compositing live-action birds side by side with their CG counterparts. "For our team of effects artists, this was the ideal opportunity for collaborations between 3-D animation and 2-D compositing," reports Tom Thill, Digiscope's executive effects producer.

Senior 3-D animator John Musumeci began developing motion tests of animation of a crow's flight by using a rough 3-D wireframe model of the closest bird available — an eagle — from Viewpoint Data Lab's library. He studied several bluescreen crow shots provided by the *City of Angels* production in order to detail the flight motion of his CG bird in a "species specific" way.

While the digital eagle worked for motion testing, Viewpoint then developed an anatomically correct crow model specifically for the film. A "stunt double" prop crow, often used by the first unit as a lighting model, was then scanned in 3-D and Musumeci used this data to further the level of detail on the CG birds.

Two shots called for a murder — or large group — of crows to circle above a building and then dive down the face of the edifice, slicing past the camera. Animating in SoftImage on an SGI Indigo II Extreme workstation, Musumeci created over 300 individual birds. Each had an individual flight pattern, wing flap and head movement to create a more random, natural feeling. Finally, the crows were composited into the plate photography via a Quantel Domino system, which ultimately required 60 layers of elements.

An in-flight crow shot was created by combining a motion-control model of the Los Angeles cityscape with a matte painting and a foreground crow flying toward the metropolis. In this case, a live crow was employed after being photographed by Dorney and the crew at Fantasy II. As the bird was to be flying away from and below the camera, the solution was to mount a track on the studio ceiling and shoot down toward the crow with a 50"-long bluescreen element beneath its flight path. The bird was released and the suspended camera dolly was simultaneously propelled along the hoped-for trajectory. Dorney credits "Crow-cam" operator John Huneck for enduring the discomfort and difficulties of spending almost two days in this hanging dolly while waiting for the bird's performance to work within the lighting corridor and bluescreen area.

Because the dolly was moving at high speed, Huneck was outfitted with a crash helmet as a safety precaution.

To composite this lengthy shot, Digiscope's senior digital artist, Mitchell S. Drain, began by linking the model/miniature passes and the matte elements. By plotting their motion, he was able to create a hookup and match the moves. Ultimately, some 20 elements, each consisting of 500 frames, were scanned and composited.

Fantasy II, which recently impressed television audiences with extensive miniature, digital, mechanical, and optical effects work in the NBC mini-series *The Beast*, provided not only elements for approximately 25 shots completed at Digiscope, but about 10 "complete, 100-percent miniature shots with nothing done to them digitally," says the company's creative director, Gene Warren Jr. "These were primarily the cityscapes and flying crow POVs over Los Angeles. No aerial shots of any scope were full-scale and it looks really good — including miniatures of downtown, the 6th Street bridge, and big sections of the L.A. river. This also included miniature moving vehicles, especially during a motorcycle chase sequence which required three shots."

The 1/24-scale city models built for the chase (including the 5' cycles) recreated several city blocks "and we flew over them and through the canyons created by the buildings," describes Warren. "This was not an expensive film, and from a cost point of view, we couldn't go much bigger on the scale. Otherwise we would have needed to rent out additional space."

He adds that one help in blending location footage to the miniatures was that the first unit art department "went out there and dirtied it up, added very specific kinds of graffiti and redressed L.A. — though very small sections — with a kind of look that we could duplicate here. The film has an overall, very stylized, consistent look, so our aerial footage matches very well and is consistent. I hate it when I'm watching a film and there's a cut to a miniature and it looks nothing like the preceding shot, so we were very careful about maintaining consistency."

For flying shots, the Crow-cam's Mitchell camera was extended out on a crane arm with a 2-to-1 drop, which gave Huneck the ability to manually dip and soar over the scaled-down landscape as he "flew" over it. "That gave us a floating, crow-like feeling," details Warren, "instead of a rigid look that you would get with motion control. In fact, we only did one motion-control shot."

These diving swoops over L.A. were shot at 6 fps "so they're really moving," adds Warren. "And with the interactive lighting and some smoke effects that we shot and composited later, they look very convincing.

"But I think part of that success is due to the fact that we do a bit of overlapping work here. We build and shoot our miniatures instead of sending them somewhere else, so we know how they have to be built and broken apart."

In addition to their miniature and element work, Fantasy II's stages played host to a series of second-unit and reshoot sessions done just weeks before the film's release.

Digiscope (310) 574-5505, Fax (310) 574-5509; Fantasy II (818) 843-1413, Fax (818) 848-2824.

Alton's Film Noir on Video

Kino on Video announces the release of *Raw Deal*, *T-Men*, and *He Walked By Night* for home viewing — under the banner "film noir classics." This trio of films features the work of legendary director Anthony Mann (*El Cid*) and his frequent collaborator, Academy-Award winning cinematographer John Alton (*An American in Paris*, *Elmer Gantry*). Working together on a series of smaller-budget pictures, Mann and Alton forged a distinctive style of bold, high-contrast black-and-white compositions that sizzled with expressive force. When

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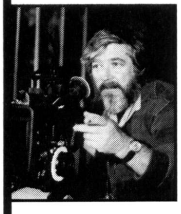

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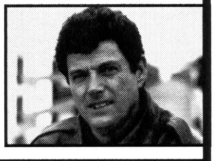

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Alton died earlier this year at the age of 94, an obituary in *Variety* described him as "the preeminent film noir cameraman," and his work with Mann as "diamond-hard."

In *Raw Deal*, Mann and Alton created the ultimate story of murder, jailbreaks and jealousy. Joe Sullivan (Dennis O'Keefe) is framed by the mob and ends up in the big house. His tough-as-nails moll, Pat (Claire Trevor), helps her man break out, but complications force them to take a hostage — Ann Martin (Marsha Hunt), a demure young secretary who's been visiting Joe in prison. The two women soon find themselves competing for Joe's affection even as his enemies, Rick (Raymond Burr) and Fantail (John Ireland), are closing in. Joe soon seduces the reluctant young Ann into a sordid world of violence, a place where she'll commit murder to save the man she loves.

The classic *T-Men* centers on a sting operation run by the U.S. Treasury Department. A retired chief of the T-Men introduces us to the workings of his law enforcement agency and the story of the Shanghai Paper Case. Flashbacks detail the story of agents Dennis O'Brien (Dennis O'Keefe) and Tony Genaro (Alfred Ryder) as they go undercover in Detroit and Los Angeles to infiltrate the Vantucci crime family's counterfeit ring. A riveting and realistic portrait of the West Coast underworld in the Forties, *T-Men* was a sleeper of its day: a low-budget crime thriller that delivered the goods with its classic blend of violence and atmosphere.

The anti-hero of *He Walked By Night*, Ray Morgan, alias Roy Martin (Richard Basehart), is a brilliant scientist and a thief. After killing a police officer during a burglary, the LAPD is determined to track Morgan down, and a massive manhunt is mounted against him. Basehart brings genuine pathos to the role of the misanthropic and lonely criminal, the epitome of the "underground man" and forerunner to modern sociopaths like *Taxi Driver*'s Travis Bickle. The final confrontation takes place in the Los Angeles County Flood Control System, a network of 7,000 miles of underground tunnels reminiscent of the sewer labyrinth of *The Third Man*. Shot in semi-documentary style, *He Walked By Night* served as the inspiration for Jack Webb's radio and TV series *Dragnet*. Though Alfred Werker ultimately received directing credit for this film, much of it was actually shot by Anthony Mann in his inimitable hard-boiled style.

To showcase Alton's gorgeous cinematography, all of the films in this Kino On Video series have been mastered from archival material.

For a complete overview of Alton's career, see *AC* Sept. 1996.

Kino on Video, (212) 629-6880, Fax (212) 714-0871.

Polanski's Directorial Debut Remastered

Knife in the Water, the 1962 psychological thriller that placed director Roman Polanski at the forefront of world cinema, has been released by Home Vision in a pristine, remastered edition.

Leon Niemczyk and Jolanta Umeka star as a successful sportswriter and his wife, enroute to a weekend on their yacht. Zygmunt Malanowicz costars as a young hitchhiker the couple invites to join them. Once the trio is aboard, tension rises as the husband derisively engages the young man in dangerous emotional games.

Photographed in stark black-and-white by Jerzy Lipman, *Knife in the Water* was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film and earned the then-budding director a place on the cover of *Time* magazine.

Home Vision, (800) 826-FILM, Fax, (312) 878-8406. ◆

Correction

The Visual Products ad that ran on page 71 in the Oct. 1996 issue of *AC* contained several errors.

The ad should have read as follows:

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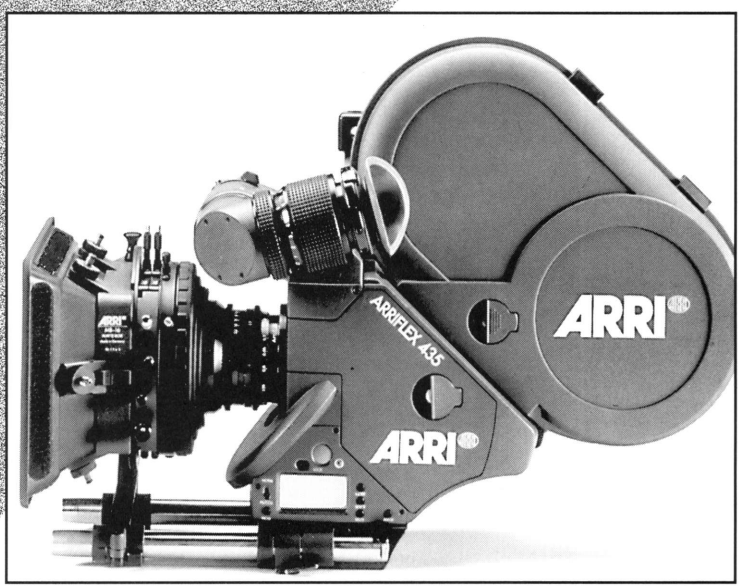

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Transforming Super 8

By reworking Kodak and Fuji's cutting-edge 35mm stocks, Super8 Sound gives the often-dismissed format new creative options.

by David E. Williams

Since the introduction of the Super 8 format in 1965, filmmakers have touted its compact size, light weight and ease of use, all while unfavorably comparing its image quality to that of 16mm. In addition to the frame-size factor (a Super 8 frame is 31% the size of its 16mm counterpart, which in turn is 22% the size of a 35mm frame), a large part of this contention is attributable to film stock performance. S8 has been hamstrung from the outset by a catalog of reversal-only emulsions.

First introduced by Kodak in the 1930s, Kodachrome (K40), though fine-grained, durable and capable of re-creating brilliant hues, has limitingly low latitude and is oppressively slow at 40 ASA. Until recently, K40 and Ektachrome (ASA 160, which debuted in 1974) would be among the few color S8 stocks made available to consumers. These two stocks are supplemented by Kodak today with their 7276 Plus X and 7278 Tri X black-and-white reversal films.

Despite this limitation, the popularity of S8 increased exponentially in the 1970s, with cameras, sound recorders and editing equipment becoming increasingly complex and capable of professional-quality use for certain applications. In 1968, an estimated 21 million feet of S8 footage was processed in the U.S. alone.

But even during S8's heyday, it was noted in an *American Cinematographer* special report (*AC* Nov. 1975) that "perhaps the most serious drawbacks to Super 8 production are the lack of professional-quality film stocks. . ."

Soon after, the arrival of portable video cameras and recorders terminated S8's evolution, as well as the commercial reasons for Kodak or any other company to address the stock issue.

However, S8 continued to be a popular format for aspiring filmmakers, and its unique qualities have been rediscovered over the last decade as professional cinematographers avidly experimented with methods to achieve degraded images, grain-rich textures and surreal colors. Over this time, S8 has been seen extensively in commercials (for Reebok, Nike and Bally's), music videos (for such artists as Madonna, Nine Inch Nails and Paula Abdul) and feature films (as shot by Jan De Bont, ASC in Ridley Scott's *Black Rain*, Michael Watkins, ASC in *Point of No Return*, and most daringly by Robert Richardson, ASC for director Oliver Stone's *JFK* and *Natural Born Killers*).

Super8 Sound, the format's key proponent and innovator since the 1970s (with offices in Burbank, CA and Cambridge, MA), has supplied S8 cameras, lenses, stock and technical support to many theatrical, commercial, and music video productions. However, company president Phillip Vigeant has also long realized the desperate need for a greater variety of film — including negative stocks — in order to maintain the format's vitality.

Vigeant had long been unable to convince any of the leading film companies (Kodak, Fuji, and, prior to its dissolution Agfa) to make other stocks available in the 8mm gauge. Further spurred by the recurring rumor that Kodak would finally discontinue their support for the format, Super8 Sound took the task upon themselves.

After years of research and development, Super8 Sound's first "Pro-8" stocks debuted in late 1993. (See "New Products," *AC* May 1994.) Utilizing customized equipment procured from Hollywood Film, Technicolor and other sources, Super8 Sound's in-house remanufacturing process consists of perfing and slitting 1000' rolls of 35mm film and reloading it into the familiar 50' plastic S8 cartridges. They also built an on-site processing lab to deliver dailies and special-order runs.

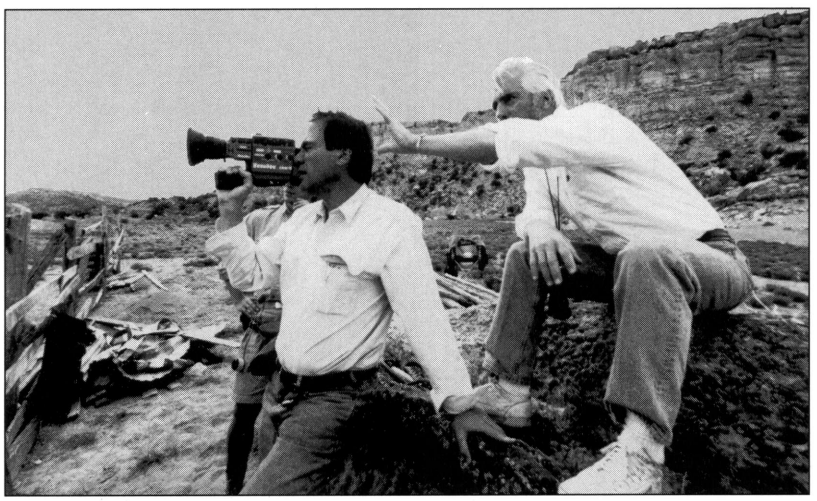
In theory, any 35mm stock (in 400' minimums) can be made into Pro-8, with each foot resulting in three feet of S8. The first to be converted were Kodak's EXR emulsions, as well as several of Fuji's Super F motion picture films and Velvia, Provia and Sensia still-photography reversal stocks. Each coaxial load runs for approximately 2.5 minutes at 24fps.

Super8 Sound is not currently dealing with black-and-white negative or infrared stocks due to the problematic buildup of static during their remanufacturing process. However, if the two available black-and-white reversal stocks are unable to fulfill a cinematographic need, it's noted that a monochrome look can easily be achieved in telecine with any of the Pro-8 color neg stocks. Though Kodak had offered magnetic-striped S8 stocks for simultaneous, single-system, in-camera sound recording, none of the Pro-8 emulsions offer this option. (Kodak recently announced its discontinuation of sound-striped S8 film.)

The results of early Pro-8 tests (performed primarily with cut-down 5248, 93, 98 and 45) were decidedly mixed, frustrated by frequent jams (in any camera other than the Beaulieu 7008 model recommended by Super8 Sound), emulsion scratches and dirt problems. The cartridges themselves, reusable versions made in Russia,

were primarily at fault due to their brutally simplistic construction.

But Pro-8 *did* work, yielding enough promising images — including footage used for the Mazzy Star music video "Fade Into You" and a series of Kia automobile and Pacific Bell commercials — to demand Super8 Sound's further investment. In response, improved air-handling, temperature control, and water filtration practices were adopted, while dust contamination was further reduced by the installation of laminar air-flow tables in their loading room, which use hepa filters to remove particles as small as five microns.



Director Oliver Stone (with Beaulieu Super 8 camera) and cinematographer Robert Richardson, ASC on location in New Mexico during the filming of* Natural Born Killers. *The S8 format was used extensively throughout the production, in both black-and-white and color, with Kodak's reversal stocks. The footage was then blown up to 35mm by Monaco/Interformat in San Francisco. (See* AC *Nov. 1994.)

A brand-new Allen Products processing machine was also installed. Super8 Sound does *not* have a reversal film processor of its own, but C-41 (Kodachrome) and E-6 (Ektachrome) services are available through the company for both Kodak's S8 stocks and the Fuji-based Pro-8 reversal films.

Vigeant notes that customers frequently utilize Super8 Sound's neg machine for cross-processing Ektachrome to achieve a unique, high-contrast, purple-tinted look.

Super8 Sound's improved loading and lab practices were then augmented by the use of Kodak's own S8 cartridge (instead of inferior Russian version), which has made jamming problems largely a dilemma of the past, even in non-Beaulieu cameras.

Extensive testing of the various Pro-8 stocks in the Kodak cartridge, carried out with many different cameras (all featuring single pull-down claw movements), revealed that the cut-down emulsions transported as easily and as glitch-free as Kodak's familiar S8 reversal films. "The Super 8 cartridge looks so simple, but the precision with which it's made is critical," says Vigeant. "When we combined Kodak's cartridge with the neg film, we found that we could use it in almost any Super 8 camera."

However, the natural-selection process of spare parts availability has already retired many of the dozens of S8 camera designs offered since 1965.

The French-based firm Beaulieu, long-recognized as the only company to make professional-grade cameras in the S8 format, is the sole manufacturer in the world with a model currently in production. In addition, they are still making replacement parts for their older equipment. The Beaulieu cameras, including the 4008, 5008 and 7008 series, also feature manual ASA selection, which allows Pro-8 users to utilize their built-in TTL light meter and aperture controls.

Most other S8 cameras rely on special notches designed into the film cartridge itself to key the proper ASA into their on-board exposure system. However, the Pro-8 cartridges have no such keying, which therefore requires that cameras have a manual exposure override in order to be used with the films.

Beaulieu's most recent model, modified by Super8 Sound, is the 7008 ProII. The camera takes full advantage of current electronics and microprocessor technologies and its exposure control can be set from 12 to 500 ASA.

Pro-8 is intended for filmmakers who telecine direct from their camera original and complete their productions as video or digital media; the emulsions have no coding to enable conforming, and the company offers no printing services. To that end, Super8 Sound recently installed an upgraded Rank Cintel Mark III with Da Vinci color correction at its Burbank site for in-house transfers. As their telecine is dedicated for exclusive use with the S8 format, the custom gate (also capable of transferring single- or duel-channel magnetic tracks) has been optimally aligned — and stays that way.

Shandor Black is one Los Angeles-based director/cinematographer who has made extensive use of many of the Pro-8 and Kodak reversal S8 emulsions — for music videos and television spots and promotional programs for such clients as Reebok and Taco Bell — since he began shooting with the format in 1991. Though S8's depth of available camera equipment and lenses offer him unique options in terms of image and mobility, Black considers the vast array of stocks now available to be the format's most exciting aspect. "Being able to reload various stocks in real time — just popping cartridges in and out — is an advantage exclusive to Super 8," he says. "But in color, it was basically a Kodachrome or Ektachrome world before the Pro-8 stocks came out. Now I can switch between Plus-X and [5245] in seconds, which gives me a lot of opportunity to capture a mood while it happens instead of trying to re-create it [after changing magazines]."

The simple mingling of black-and-white and color stocks is not Black's sole intent, however. He also sees S8 as the format of choice when creating the texturally driven images so prevalent in contemporary commercial and music video work. "People often comment on the Impressionistic feeling of Super 8 when you use the Kodak

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stocks," offers the small-gauge film specialist, "and though there's an inherent warmth and textural quality to the format, I've spent a fortune on extremely sharp Angenieux and Schneider lenses for my Beaulieu 7008. With those and the clarity and detail that the new negative stocks add, I have a whole new dimension of possibilities at hand."

Asked if audiences' changing aesthetics have had an impact on what his clients are looking for, Black observes, "In recent years, viewers have become less interested in clarity and more interested in suggestion — esoteric and ethereal looks. That's reflected by the style's acceptance by bigger clients, such as Reebok or Rollerblade, or in feature films like *Natural Born Killers* or *Dead Man Walking*. And what's interesting is that Super 8 wasn't necessarily used in these cases as a nostalgic device, but as a textural one."

Black recalls the recent NAB show in Las Vegas, noting, "One side of the room was completely devoted to digital imaging — trying to get the most perfect, lifelike quality possible. On the other side, a lot of people were talking about degradation and trying to make video look like film by introducing grain and frame-rate effects. That's an interesting contradiction. So why not just shoot film? Going further, why not shoot film that will allow you to really degrade something if you want to?"

While many have long fought to diminish the grain structure of S8 images, Black finds he often tries to magnify it as much as possible, "especially with Kodachrome. Sometimes I'll go so far as to project the footage and use a Betacam to shoot it off the screen. That way you can almost examine the molecular structure of your subject, which can be a very powerful effect."

When looking for image clarity, Black's favorite is the 5245-derived Pro-8 stock. "Right now, there are 12 stocks available in Super 8, but the 45 is exceptional," he attests. "It's absolutely grainless if you light it right, and if you've got it on the Rank, it looks as good any 16mm footage I've ever seen. Then I go right to the 93, if I'm shooting in low light or at night.

"But what's really exciting to me about the Super 8 format is that it's actually expanding so rapidly because of all the stocks now available," Black concludes. "I have all the tools I need to evolve."

Minimalist filmmaker Jim Jarmusch (*Stranger Than Paradise, Mystery Train, Dead Man*) and co-cameraman Larry Johnson recently shot Pro-8 negative and Kodak reversal stocks for the music video "Big Time," featuring Neil Young and Crazy Horse. The pair then transferred their footage at Super8 Sound's in-house telecine bay. Says Jarmusch, "I love the look of Super 8, the texture of it. We shot a lot of Tri-X and Ektachrome for the video, but we never could have done it without the 500-speed negative [5298], as we were filming in this small bar with basically no lights. And the footage turned out quite beautifully."

Adds Johnson, "We had to have that 500 ASA Super 8 stock because of the lighting situation, but we also used the 98 because we wanted to avoid the finer grain negative stocks and retain a bit of the Super 8 feeling."

Pleased with the results of the "Big Time" shoot, Young invited Jarmusch and Johnson to document his band's European tour. "We could have shot on 16mm, but we decided to use Super 8 because it was so free and mobile," says Jarmusch. "We could just pop in cassettes and shoot constantly without having to load magazines. And that liberated us aesthetically, so we felt free to shoot anything that moved instead of being as careful or restrained as we probably would have been with 16mm. This was great for me because my feature work is usually very controlled, and I've never used much handheld stuff at all.

"Neil thought Super 8 was great too, in that it was so nice to have this little camera you could just carry in your bag. So while we did shoot some concert footage in 16mm and some long interview interrogations on Hi-8 video, most of our footage was Super 8.

"My video editor, Jay Rabinowitz, commented that the

"Big Time" video was made with a Nineties' mentality using updated Sixties' technology. And that suited the song, because while I didn't want to make a Neil Young video that was nostalgic for the Sixties, I did want a bit of that aura. And Super 8 does click off something in your memory. It's not 'current,' it's not digital imagery, but it has a unique quality."

Ironically, the quality of the Pro-8 footage proved problematic for unexpected reasons. Explains Jarmusch, "We were at a post house for our telecine and the [Pro-8] negative stuff looked so nice that they said, 'We can make this look just like 16mm.' And I said, 'No, no, that's not what we want.' But they just didn't understand, so I came back to Super8 Sound to do the transfer. I didn't want it all crushed down; I wanted the grain, and they did a great job."

With a chuckle, the filmmaker adds, "When I went to the on-line session, my technician wanted to make it look like 16mm too, so it was the same situation all over again."

The unobtrusiveness of the S8 format also played into Jarmusch and Johnson's experiences on the road with the band in Italy. "At first, Neil said, 'You guys have to wear all black and stay where I can't see you,'" Jarmusch recalls. "But after three or four shows, these guys from MTV showed up with their video gear to get some footage and Neil said, 'Nobody is allowed up on stage except Jim and Larry and they can go wherever they want!'"

Asked why he didn't rely on small-gauge video for a greater part of the documentary shoot if ease of use and mobility were such a concern, Jarmusch explains, "I've done a lot of things in video, but it just doesn't get me *up* like film does. And Super 8 almost magnifies the things I love about film — the texture, the frame rate, and the feeling of it."

Extensive telecine transfers of Pro-8 negative film have also been performed by Editel in Los Angeles, with sessions conducted primarily by Gino Pinaro. Offers Pinaro, "Getting the best quality transfer from [the Pro-8]

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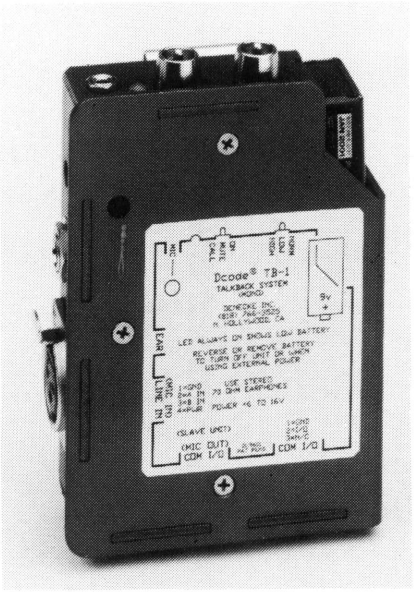

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requires a different technique than 35mm, but the saturation, latitude and image detail is quite good — especially in nighttime shoots, which would have been impossible with [Kodak's] old reversal stocks.

"A qualitative difference between 35mm, 16mm and the Super 8 neg is still discernible — with the major differences depending upon proper exposure and magnification of grain. But if someone is shooting well, it compares very well. The 5245 [Pro-8] is one of the best-looking stocks, and people are amazed. I recently did a session with someone who shot on both Super 8 reversal and neg, and once they saw the control we had with the negative, they wished they had shot it all that way."

Pro-8 doesn't require any special handling during transfer — though extra care in keeping it clean is recommended as any dirt will be magnified exponentially. Says Pinaro, "We use extra PTR 'sticky' rollers to keep the film clean. But more importantly, we keep the film itself at a constant, even tension while it's on the Rank — because it will snap if you aren't careful."

He concludes, "I have been working with Super8 Sound since they began running the neg, and they have made great strides in quality control — eliminating dirt and scratches — so it's looking very good. And the creative possibilities the film offers are amazing."

Vigeant notes that the improvement of Pro-8 is additionally due to lab tests and technical information supplied by Kodak. "We can now offer a variety of stocks that no one else can, in 16 or 35mm, as well as fill custom orders. So we're confident that the Pro-8 idea will indefinitely ensure the viability of Super 8, because we can now offer any stock to our customers as soon as it's released in 35mm. That future-proofs Super 8 to the same extent that 35mm is protected."

As an example, Vigeant points to the Pro-8 version of Kodak's new 500T Vision stock, recently used to shoot concert sequences for a music video produced in New Zealand. "With 5298, the grain is very apparent in Super 8, even with perfectly exposed footage," he admits. "But the Pro-8 version of the Vision 500T is incredible, and comparable to 16mm 98 if someone is shooting direct for video."

Vigeant also points out that the Pro-8 option also allows both student and professional cinematographers to experiment easily and frugally with new film stocks and lab practices before going to the expense of shooting in 35mm — most particularly with films that are not yet available in 16mm, such as the Primetime and Vision emulsions.

Despite the derogatory "amateur" label that has dogged S8 since its introduction, the precision necessary to create successful images in the format has been a formidable obstacle for beginners looking for a "professional" rather than "experimental" look. Improper focus, exposure mistakes and other mishaps are three times more apparent in S8 than they are in 16mm. Vigeant points out that "the format became known as 'amateur' partially because the cameras have always been deceptively easy to load and use, just as camcorders are now. But Super 8 was very difficult to master because you had to really understand cinematography and lighting to get good results with the stocks available. I love Kodachrome, but you really understand how unforgiving it is after shooting 93 or 98. Unlike with negative stocks, you can't rely on your timer in the lab or telecine operator to take advantage of the film's latitude and fix your problems. When something goes black in Kodachrome, it's black forever. But our Pro-8 stocks, combined with all of the choices that a modern telecine bay offers, create opportunities that no one could have imagined just a few years ago. And the cameras are *still* easy to load and use.

"There are probably 60 million S8 cameras out there in the world, a fact which, when combined with modern film stocks, creates an incredible image-making potential — a new option that will help encourage and develop the next generation of cinematographers and filmmakers." ◆

PETER NYDRLE

ON FILM

"When I was growing up in Prague, you either became a college student or a soldier at the age of 17. That's why I continued my studies, which eventually led to film school. MTV was still somewhat experimental when I started directing videos in 1985. It was much more free form than it is today. You tried to interpret someone's vision of a song and created images. Kids would ask, 'What does that song look like?' Commercials were a natural progression for me. As a TV commercial director, I prefer to shoot my own films, because I know what's in my mind. Commercials can be a form of art, but first you have to master the craft. If a commercial connects with the audience on an emotional level then it's art. It's what the film makes people feel about the sponsor that's important. That's what they remember. In the end, the art of cinematography is always about lighting. You can learn the technical aspect from experience. But you need a special feeling for lighting. No two people do it the same way."

Profile: Peter Nydrle was born in Czechoslovakia and graduated from the state film school in Prague. His first film, *Eugene Among Us,* was a comedy. The government didn't laugh. In 1980, they told Nydrle he would never shoot another film. In 1983, he left the country and swore he wouldn't return until his film was shown in Wenceslas Square in Prague. Nydrle worked at odd jobs in L.A., including delivering pizzas, for several years until he directed a hit music video. Some seven years later, Nydrle directed and shot a PSA called *From Prisoner to President* for Amnesty International. That put him on the fast track as a director/cinematographer for G.M.S. Productions. His credits include spots for National Car Rental, Ford, American Express, Mercedes, Estee Lauder, Reebok and others.

P.S. In 1990, Nydrle visited Prague for the first time in seven years when his film, *Eugene Among Us,* was shown in Wenceslas Square. Sometimes dreams come true.

For more information on Peter Nydrle or Kodak motion picture film, visit our website at http://www.kodak.com

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Photography: Douglas Kirkland

Kodak

Make Every Second Count

Irish engineer John Patterson (Val Kilmer) arrives in Kenya to find himself cast as both a hunter and a hunted. While Zsigmond regularly used multiple cameras, action sequences involving hundreds of extras were sometimes covered by as many as six units.

The African continent has long been a popular backdrop for Hollywood's adventures, even if the films themselves have been primarily shot in the Los Angeles area. Perhaps the most famous of this lot, W.S. Van Dyke's *Tarzan, The Ape Man* (1932), was exclusively filmed on MGM's backlot and soundstages. Those productions that have braved the adversity of Africa's landscapes have been regularly rewarded with spectacular images.

Director John Huston and cinematographer Jack Cardiff, ASC were among the first to shoot a major feature on location there, having captured the jungles of the Belgian Congo (now known as Zaire) in Technicolor for *The African Queen* (1952); this experience was later recounted in Clint Eastwood's film *White Hunter, Black Heart* (1990), which Jack Green, ASC shot primarily in Zimbabwe. In 1986, director Sydney Pollack and cameraman David Watkin, BSC both earned Academy Awards for their work on *Out of Africa*, which was strikingly photographed on the Kenyan veldt.

The recent dismantling of apartheid in South Africa has created a new gateway to the majestic landscapes and rich cultures located the previously boycotted nation. One of the first Hollywood productions to take advantage of this location opportunity is *The Ghost and The Darkness*, a true-story adventure which finds human bravery pitted against animal cunning.

Based on a book by John Patterson, an Irish engineer assigned to oversee the building of a railroad bridge over Kenya's Tsavo river in 1896, the film details the horror he confronted as two renegade lions began preying upon his African construction crew. Given the names Ghost and Darkness, the feline pair fatally slaugh-

Night of the Hunters

Cinematographer Vilmos Zsigmond, ASC goes on location in South Africa with director Stephen Hopkins for the big-game thriller *The Ghost and the Darkness*.

by David E. Williams

Photos by Frank Connor and Stephen F. Morley, courtesy of Paramount Pictures.

Brought in to solve the lion problem, Remington (Michael Douglas) finds himself to be ill-equipped against his quarry. The final hunt sequence was shot on stage. As, Zsigmond explains, "We needed to do some day-for-night scenes because the ending scene involved using fog, which we could not have controlled outdoors."

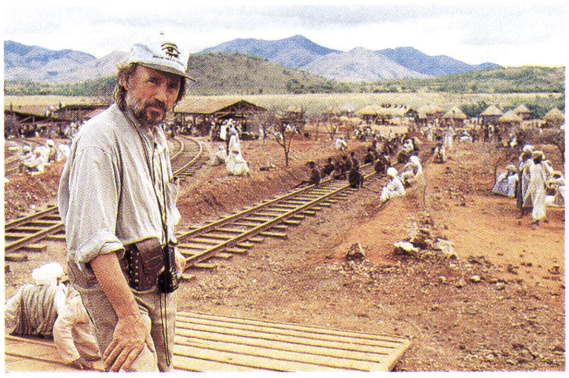
tered some 130 workers, compelling Patterson (played by Val Kilmer) to take up arms with a professional hunter named Remington (executive producer Michael Douglas) in order to stop the twin predators.

Despite this factual support, director of photography Vilmos Zsigmond, ASC saw the creative difficulty in realistically bringing such a seemingly fantastic tale to the silver screen. "This was something that even people back then could not understand or believe," he says. "Lions generally do not attack people. They are afraid of them. But perhaps these two lions were too old to hunt other animals — man is easy prey."

Zsigmond's major credits include *The Hired Hand*, *McCabe and Mrs. Miller*, *Images*, *The Long Goodbye*, *Scarecrow*, *The Last Waltz*, *The Rose*, *Flesh and Blood*, *Blow Out*, *The River* (which earned him an Academy Award nomination), *The Witches of Eastwick*, *The Two Jakes*, *The Bonfire of the Vanities*, *Stalin* (which garnered both ASC and Emmy Awards), *Sliver*, *Intersection*, *The Crossing Guard* and *Assassins*.

His extensive resume also includes such stand-out location-shot films as *The Sugarland Express*, *Deliverance*, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (which earned him an Academy Award), *Heaven's Gate* and *The Deer Hunter* (which was also Oscar-nominated, and earned Zsigmond a BAFTA Award).

Zsigmond candidly admits, however, that he was not director Stephen Hopkins' initial choice to shoot *The Ghost and the Darkness*. "When I first met with Stephen, he was not really happy with my being brought in as the cameraman," he recounts. "He had a very good Australian cinematographer, Peter Levy [ACS], whom he had worked with on three other pictures — *Blown Away*, *Predator 2* and *Judgment Night*. They have a



The production constructed their key sets on their riverside location near the Songimvelo Game Reserve, based on the plans of production designer Stuart Wurtzel. Says Zsigmond (above), "The sets were built by hundreds of local carpenters and greensmen, and they didn't have a single bad angle."

terrific relationship, but the studio and the producers asked me to shoot this film.

"I felt sorry for Stephen, because I understand the connection between the director and the cameraman, how they have to talk and plan the style of the film and understand one another. So this was how we started off, and there was a bit of distance between us at first, no matter how well I was doing.

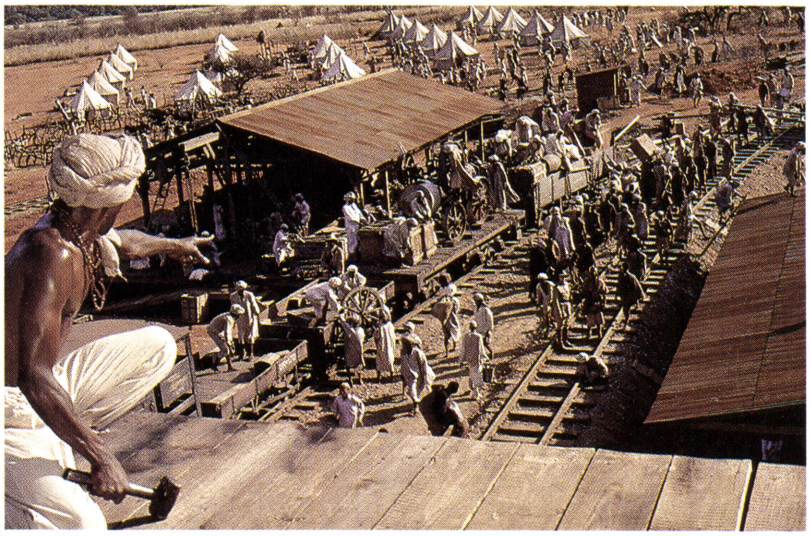
"But I have to do my best on all of my movies. They are all important, because my reputation depends on it and I have a personal responsibility to capture the mood of the piece and tell the story visually in a way that the audience will respond to — which will make them believe what they are seeing. And this was especially important on this film because the story is so amazing. You have to believe that the lions were that ferocious and really attacking people."

This approach ultimately earned Hopkins' respect, and Zsigmond's experience with the director became a very positive one. The cinematographer recounts, "After a preview of the picture, Stephen came to me and said, 'I think you did as good a job as Peter would have done.'

"This was a compliment, especially since Peter is his cameraman of choice, but there are so many great cinematographers in the world that you cannot say one would be better than another. It's the personal relationship you have with the director that makes more of a difference, and I was glad to find on this shoot that Stephen was a sensitive, truly visual director with a lot of great ideas."

But Zsigmond too was faced with a working-relationship dilemma when he found out that due to work permit and expense reasons, only his closest crew members could accompany him to South Africa. "I was only able to bring my Steadicam and first camera operator Neal Norton, operator Joseph Urbanczyk, first assistant Dennis Seawright and key grip Michael Miller. But we found some very good crew people there who helped us out tremendously.

"However, as South Africa is a very popular place to shoot right now, we lost a lot of the local crew people we hired, especially in the lighting department, to other shows. We had to rely on many beginners, teaching them how to set lights and run cables, so I was very happy that I had my regular gaffer Bobby Jason. He searched for a reliable, English-speaking gaffer and rigging grip and found Vincent Fletcher and Peter du Plessis. Bobby solved this problem, working miracles sometimes to do it. But he had to do it because I was spending so much time with the camera crews.



"Language was a major problem because many of the local electricians didn't speak English," he adds. "How can you do complex lighting when you can't tell people what to do? That hurt our production speed, and it's difficult enough that everyone expects you to be a miracle worker nowadays."

Fortunately, the production did find a good supply of equipment in-country. "We used practically everything available in the lighting arsenal at Movie Camera Company in Johannesburg. They had the 10Ks, 20Ks, and HMIs we needed, but there were several other productions going on at the same time and MCC ended up importing some equipment from England for us."

One convenience for Zsigmond was that he could continue his reliance on Panavision cameras — Golds and Platinums — but the cinematographer had to adapt to Hopkins' use of multiple units, at least two for interiors and as many as six or seven for exterior action and crowd scenes. Says the cameraman, "Most cinematographers hate to shoot with multiple cameras, because you cannot light correctly for so many angles, but I learned from Stephen that when you get to the editing stage it's nice to have that coverage. And he picked the right angles when it came to cutting the scenes, so the effort to use multiple cameras wasn't wasted — which was a wonderful thing to see. He also understood my situation, especially in lighting opposing angles, which is not easy to do. If I could not do what he wanted, he would say, 'Okay, then let's try something else.'"

Because only a limited amount of cameras could be outfitted with a complete sets of anamorphic lenses, Zsigmond relied heavily on zooms, particularly the Primo 11:1, although the production mainly used C- and E-se-

ries prime lenses. He says, "We had two of the 11:1 zooms — the second unit had one — and we could have used more, but they weren't available. For me, this is the best overall lens ever made and I could practically shoot a whole movie with one. It's just so easy and convenient to use a zoom to find your shot — instead of changing lenses or moving back and forth — so why not?"

The cinematographer points out that while the use of zooms reduced the production's lens order, it also required night scenes and interiors (shot on Kodak's 500 ASA 5298) be lit for a minimum stop of T4. For maximum flexibility during daylight shooting, Zsigmond relied on 200 ASA 5293, which gave him "incredible latitude and proved to be the best film to shoot with in South Africa under the difficult weather conditions we had. It gives you beautiful blacks without losing shadow detail. We also needed the speed of this emulsion to be able to use Pola screens and graduated filters for the sky, and, many times, attenuators. These filters helped us to get the most out of South Africa's beautiful clouds and make the sky visually dramatic."

Zsigmond had considered using 5245 for scenes when bright sunlight was available, but decided against adding another stock to the mix. "When you're using 45 and it starts getting dark, you have to change stocks. And when you're shooting with so many cameras, it's easy for someone to make a mistake while loading or unloading film," the cinematographer says.

On their riverside location near the Songimvelo Game Reserve, the production constructed their key sets — a railroad station, the bridge and a small town — based on the plans of production designer Stuart Wurtzel. "They were terrific," Zsigmond enthuses. "The sets were built by hundreds of local carpenters and greensmen, and they didn't have a single bad angle. More than a square mile of land around them had to be planted with trees and bushes transported in from a long distance away.

Patterson hunts through the lowland bush. For exterior scenes involving the trained lions, an area was fenced off and redressed as necessary to represent various topographies. "We had to basically re-create Africa in this tiny space, because if the animals had ever gotten out we would never have found them again," says Zsigmond.

"This was a lot of work and very expensive, but being there added tremendous texture to the film that we never would have had anywhere else. Though this was South Africa standing in for Kenya, we never could have shot the film in that country because they don't have the technical support we needed."

However, the production did have a Kenya unit, which shot scenery and wildlife footage there for early scenes in the film as Patterson arrives in the eastern African nation from England. Jack Couffer was the director of photography, assisted by his son, Mike Couffer, with Zsigmond's operator, Neal Norton, on Steadicam. "They used some 5248," recounts Zsigmond, "but they didn't have to worry about speed for landscape shots."

Ironically, lions from around the world were imported to South Africa to play the film's title characters, but as Zsigmond recalls, it was extremely difficult to find the right animals to work with. "Two lions were brought in from Los Angeles, but one was sent back after a week because he attacked a trainer," the cameraman says. "It was an accident — the lion was frightened — but he was instantly back on the plane and gone. Two others from France were really incredible. Their trainer didn't reward them after doing a trick, but commanded their respect by really *mastering* them. Instead of turning these animals into cats or puppets, he could let them be lions. So for many of our shots where we needed the lions to be ferocious, we used these two from France.

"We had arrived in South Africa about a month before the main shoot would begin and did a lot of tests, like how to film the lions doing different actions: running, attacking, hiding in the bushes. But it was difficult just to get them to move from point A to point B. They're actually quite lazy animals, especially in the heat. They just lay down and do nothing, but we couldn't spend two years shooting this film, so the tests were primarily important to see what we *could* get them to do."

But while the trained cats added a distinct authenticity to *Darkness*, safety precautions led to strict limitations on how the animals could be used. "This film could not have been made with the technology that was available even five years ago, because of the way we relied on digital postproduction to combine the lions with people," says Zsigmond, crediting visual effects supervisor Stuart Robertson, as well as effects supervisor Tim McGovern and director of visual effects photography Chuck Schuman, both

The hunt is on. Zsigmond hopes that the majestic beauty of the film's African landscapes will be a strong draw for movie-goers.

from Sony Imageworks. "We also used animatronic lions as well, and many times — especially for specific movements and the chewing up of people in attack scenes — we relied on them to do things we could never have done for real. Some of these very complex animatronic lions could do 100 different things at the same time.

"So for most of the picture, we tried to keep the lions moving between light and shadows. We knew that if we kept the real lions and the animatronic versions moving through such patterns, we could rely on the darkness to blend them together. This was a method we used throughout the film, so when we went to post and had to combine things, we had a good starting point."

Described by Zsigmond as a very talented sketch-artist, Hopkins himself had carefully storyboarded all of the lion sequences long before the cameraman joined the production. Says the cinematographer, "We had a good idea of what the second unit would be doing, what would be shot with bluescreen and what we wanted to do for real. But we often found that the trained lions just wouldn't do what we wanted them to, so we added a lot of bluescreen and animatronic shots."

For many exterior scenes, the real lions were placed in an open area approximately 150' square, sealed off by carefully camouflaged fences. Details Zsigmond, "The director and camera crew were usually inside a steel cage, shooting between the bars," Zsigmond relates. "And the animals were outside in this so-called freedom within the compound. Each shot was then individually staged, with trees, grass and bushes dressed in this area. We had to basically re-create Africa in this tiny space, because if the animals had ever gotten out we would never have found them again. So for this reason, and our own safety, we were very careful with the lions. These scenes were always done with multiple cameras, at least three or four."

According to effects supervisor Robertson, the bluescreen work was done on a 50' x 100' stage constructed next to the main stage built on their location. "In addition to the problems of electrical failure, extreme heat and insects, the bluescreen stage was particularly susceptible to the vast amount of red dust and mud that would filter into, or be tracked onto, the stage," he says. "This would contaminate the Diazen drapes and the blue floor which we had planned on using."

Visual effects cinematographer Schuman, Zsigmond's second-unit director of photography Gabriel Beristain, and second-unit production manager Bruce Devan worked closely together in designing the stage, which after construction was rigged with a system of Kino Flos designed by Schuman. The stage itself was fashioned out of modular 4' x 8' platforms, surfaced with carpet, and painted with Rosco #5722 Super Ultimatte Blue. "That would be the working floor for the lions," says Robertson. "This allowed us re-configure the working space quickly and easily."

Reports Robertson, "We had tested blue- and greenscreens for use with the lions, finally choosing blue because the green component in the lions' overall yellowish color made for better separation against the blue."

Adds Zsigmond, "Gabriel and the South African operator, Harmon Cusack, who is very talented, did a very good job working under extremely difficult conditions. In addition to the bluescreen work, they enriched the movie with fine details, sometimes working with hundreds of extras when our principals actors were not involved."

If a scene required the lions to seemingly interact with groups of people, the necessary shots were always done on the bluescreen stage. "This was done not only because it would have been impossible to have the animals performing with people," Zsigmond explains, "but because we wanted to actually make the lions seem bigger physically. So in doing the digital composites, we enlarged them to appear even more threatening."

As often as possible, Robertson relied on traditional split-screen work for shots in which the actors and lions would appear close together in the same frame. Says the effects supervisor, "This technique has become very powerful thanks to the development of digital tools, which allow the greatest possible realism since both the actors and the lions can work in and interact with the same lighting and practical environment.

"The majority of our split shots occur at the end of the film, when Darkness chases Patterson across the unfinished bridge, climbs the tree after him, and then, wounded, crawls after him on the ground."

One of the most critical shots of the lions, in which they first appear in frame together, revealing to the audience that there are in fact two animals responsible for the rampage, was not done as a

composite. Says Zsigmond, "I don't recall that we ever put them together digitally. That particular shot was done with an extremely long lens and a split diopter, which compressed the space between the lions and kept them both in sharp focus."

However, the lions' trainers were able to carefully coax the feline performers into doing what most of us would consider best achieved with special effects. In one scene, a lion was to leap directly upon and maul one of the hunters. "The trainer, Hubert Wells, had taught his lion to jump on him — and this was a big, mature animal — by putting a little piece of raw meat here," Zsigmond describes, gesturing to his throat. "I think their relationship had been established so early on that the lion would not hurt this guy, but here was a very unpredictable animal. He was a trained cat, but you could never know when the real lion was going to come out. Still, we used that trick several times in the film, including the nightmare sequence in which Patterson's wife is attacked. The trainer dressed up as the woman and did the stunt himself."

Particularly difficult for Zsigmond and gaffer Bobby Jason were the night exterior portions of the shoot, which took up the final weeks of the 73-day production. "We had to light up huge areas," recalls the cinematographer, "and because we were shooting in anamorphic, we needed at least a T4 to 4.5. To do this, Bobby told me, 'I need English-speaking electricians, or I cannot do my job.' So we shipped in two people from England to help us out. For some reason it was easier than bringing in people from the States — perhaps due to the old relationship between that country and South Africa. But they were terrific and Bobby could get things done right.

"For those scenes, MCC supplied us with some Wendy lights, which we used since they don't have Muscos. They aren't as good, but we could get them up to 100 feet and actually shoot big night scenes, particularly the sequence at the end, in which the hunters are driving the lions out of the bush by setting fires.

"The line of fire was about a half mile out. Obviously, it wasn't a real fire, because if it had been we would have only had one shot at it. So we had to control that fire with pipes and butane. We were burning fuel like crazy, so we were restricted in terms of how many shots we could take."

But in fact, fire would be one of the key sources and motivations for Zsigmond's lighting approach on *The Ghost and the Darkness*, with yellow flames appearing in almost every nighttime composition. The cinematographer explains, "You have to have a source, so we used a lot of candlelight, lantern and fire effects. Also, this was part of the period and the dramatic mood of the story. People lit fires to ward off the lions and defend themselves. So 50 percent of the time, fire was our main light source.

"In order to not lose any footcandles, we used 3200°K tungsten lights for our fire effects, without any gels, and printed the warmer tones into our dailies. I've used this method on all of my previous movies, most recently on *Assassins*. [See *AC* Nov. '95.] To create the right blue mix for nighttime scenes, I'd use HMIs with some CTO gels to bring the color temperature down to 5000° or 4500°K, sometimes 4000°K, depending on

In one of Zsigmond's favorite sequences, Michael Douglas takes part in a fireside dance during a ceremonial ritual. The cameraman explains, "The tribe we were depicting in the film was the Masai, but as we were shooting in South Africa and the Masai do not travel from their homeland, we had another Kenyan tribe, the Samburus, portraying them."

how much blue we needed for dusk or night shots."

Processing and dailies were done at Videolab, near Johannesburg in Irene. Explains Zsigmond, "To make their job easier, we'd supply them with a 'corrected' gray chart. If we wanted the dailies to look warmer, we shot the chart through a blue gel in front of the lens. This way, the lab, by printing the card to be neutral white-gray, automatically gave us our expected warm look. We could also use this method to create a blue moonlight from a scene lit with warm tungsten sources by shooting the gray chart through a full CTO gel. I have great praise for lab managers Andy Stead and Jack Norte, and for our timer, Reginald Pillay, who worked day and night to make our beautiful dailies."

Zsigmond plans the final timing in the film to be "a bit on the warm side. I thought Africa should have a bit of yellow to it, but I also felt that would help with the period feel as it moves toward the sepia-tone. At this point, as I see it, the whole picture needs a lot of work in the answer-print stage.

"But I'm glad we used Videolab because it was important for Stephen to see our dailies so he could know what was working and what wasn't. It was also crucial because we were using so many cameras, and I had to know what shots were working. Finally, it was important to the visual effects people. The alternative was sending the footage to London, which involved a three-day turnaround time."

Zsigmond stresses that it was vital for him to communicate these timing changes to not only the second unit, but the digital unit as well, since they would also have to create these lighting effects. Throughout the production, the cameraman remained in contact with Stuart Robertson's team. "I love the possibilities that digital effects offer to help make our films look better," Zsigmond says. "But cinematographers also have to retain their control by following up after the shooting has ended and staying in touch during the post-production stage. On this film, I'm following up on every detail, meeting with the digital artists and trying to help them match their shots to what we were trying to do on location and on set. We have to do that ourselves, otherwise that will become someone else's responsibility. I'm not getting paid to do it, but I want to keep that control over the film if the director and the producers will let me. Hopefully though, in the future, there will be a budget for our time, and that will make postproduction even easier. Meanwhile, I'm delighted to go down there and protect my work."

As on most location-shot productions, weather proved to be a major concern for *The Ghost and the Darkness*, which was filmed during South Africa's rainy season. The unending showers brought out lush vegetation, dramatic cloud formations and rainbows, but according to Zsigmond, "We had some incredible storms, which flooded our locations, washed out the bridge set and often forced us to find someplace else to shoot. And while we had one storm sequence in the film — which was ultimately cut out — we didn't really want to bring this element into the story, so we had to shoot around it. But we couldn't rely on the weather to remain the same. If it was sunny in the morning, you could bet it would be raining in the afternoon. So matching light was extremely difficult on this film, and we often had to bring in HMIs to finish off a sequence that we had started shooting in sunshine."

This discrepancy also worked directly against Stephen Hopkins' shooting strategy, which often called for wide, panoramic shots. Offers Zsigmond, "Stephen thinks like a cinematographer in that he likes visuals and loves to see big shots. He thinks it's part of the movie experience. And a lot of credit goes to him for this film's look, because he knows that these kinds of wide shots work so well with this type of storytelling.

"When you are doing these kinds of landscapes, the most important thing photographically is to use sharp lenses — I'd usually like to use a Primo 40mm prime, although we were using E- and C-series lenses on this shoot. But you cannot use diffusion filters. And if I have a shot which begins on a landscape and ends in a close-up on an actor's face, that's when I like to use my sliding Soft/FX filter, which was custom made for me by Tiffen and goes from zero to two. So the shot begins very sharp and then softens by the time the camera ends on the face. I don't like shooting close-ups with an ultra-sharp lens. It's unbearable, especially in anamorphic. You're not accustomed to seeing people like that onscreen, and it can make someone seem 20 years older.

"I like the C-series lenses because they are softer and better for faces and don't require any obvious diffusion. We did, however, use a lot of graduated filters to bring out the skies. On overcast days, since you have to open up the f-stop to photograph your actors, the clouds will disappear. So by lowering the brightness of the sky by two stops with a neutral density graduated filter, I could hold the details in the highlights.

While on the subject of shooting such vistas, Zsigmond brings up the fact that the studio, possibly because of the film's many night scenes, had initially wanted *The Ghost and the Darkness* to be photographed in Super 35 in order to achieve its 2.35:1 frame. The cinematographer, an ardent proponent of the anamorphic process, was consulted by Hopkins on the issue and the director "asked me to tell him sincerely what I thought about Super 35. And I told him that it wouldn't be right for this picture primarily because of all the digital effects we were going to have to do. The image quality would deteriorate considerably in post, and I just didn't want to ruin this beautiful African movie by reducing it to look like Super 35. So we struggled occasionally during the night shooting and some interiors, and had some problems because we needed more lights, but it was worth it for a visual picture like this."

Zsigmond also commends Hopkins for telling this historical story with a modern filmmaking approach, explaining, "Even if you're making a period film, you have to shoot it in a way that appeals to today's audiences, who are

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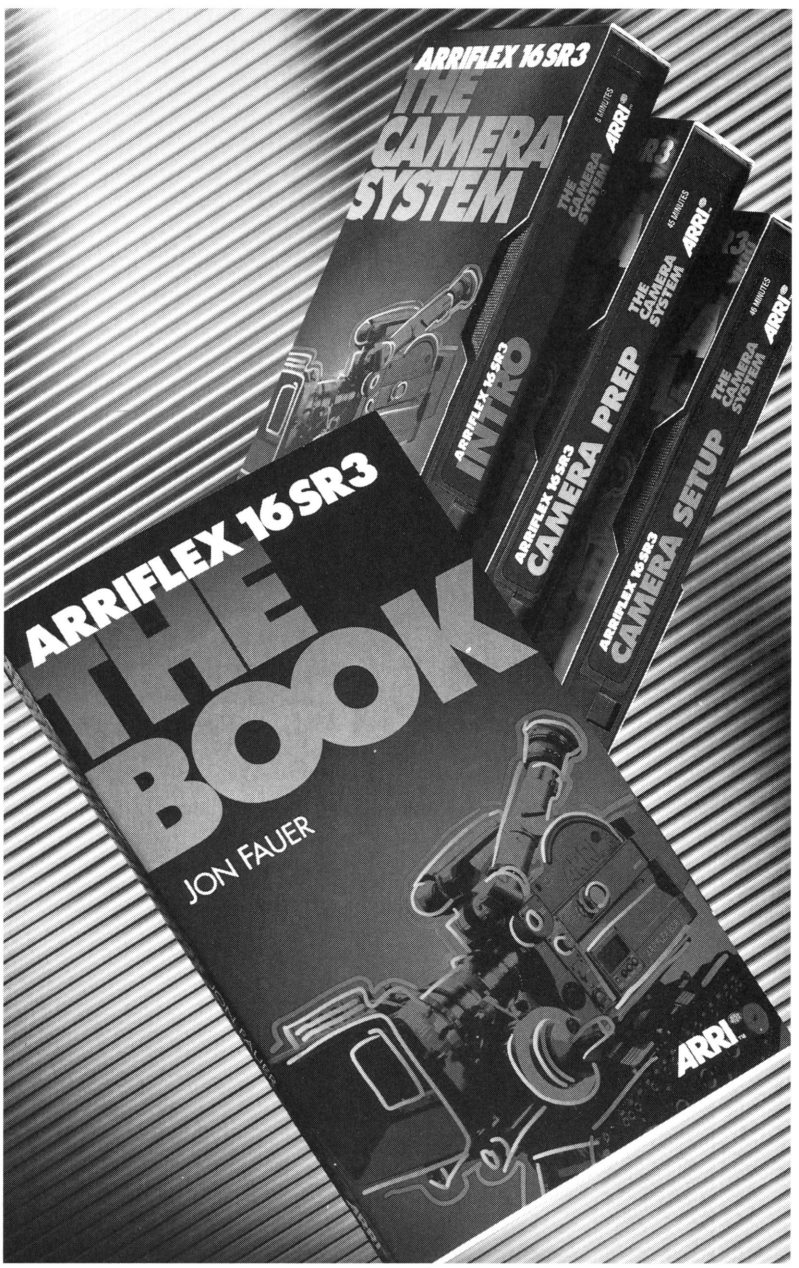

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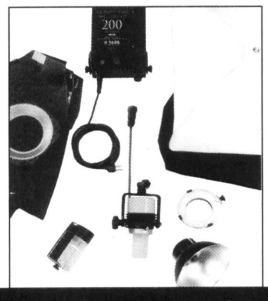

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used to much faster, more cinematic camerawork and editing. You can't suddenly go back to an old style, even in a period film, because they just won't buy it. So you have to have more movement and faster cutting, but big, impactive shots and the wide frame are part of that as well.

"Fortunately though, this film also has very strong characters, so it won't depend so heavily on trendy editing to make the story work. The character of John Patterson, for example, is seen at the beginning of the film as a very proper military man, and we watch him change into a hunter. A lot of that transition is wardrobe and make-up and the directorial approach, so photographically I didn't have to do too much. We didn't have to beautify him, especially as his appearance was slowly deteriorating. In fact, this was one picture where I didn't have to worry about how glamorous anybody looked. We seldom used diffusion as our actors didn't need it, but I would occasionally use a Tiffen Soft/FX ½ or 1."

In discussing the performances in the film, Zsigmond points out the pleasure he and his crew had in photographing a sequence in which co-star Michael Douglas takes part in a fireside dance during a ceremonial ritual of the indigenous culture. "The tribe we were depicting in the film was the Masai, but as we were shooting in South Africa and the Masai do not travel from their homeland, we had another Kenyan tribe, the Samburus, portraying them," the cinematographer explains. "Physically, they are tall and very athletic and would jump as high as three feet off the ground during the dance, which was very exciting and interesting to shoot. That scene is probably my favorite in the film."

As for dealing with the rich palette of complexions the cast presented, Zsigmond notes that Val Kilmer's extremely pale skin tone contrasted heavily with that of the African actors. Compensating for this disparity was "just a matter of adding or subtracting light, adding backlight or crosslight. But I normally do that with everybody because I like my lighting to have three dimensions. I like it to be more directional, and while that may seem old-fashioned, I got tired of soft lighting and now look for a more film noir effect, which is more stylized.

"All night lighting can be done in a film noir style. During the day, you have to work harder to find those shadows — because film noir is about having more shadow than light — but you can find a way to do it. Shooting under trees or in a forest, for example, can help achieve that effect by breaking up the light."

The climax of the film, which consists of the final confrontation between Patterson and the lions, was primarily shot on the huge stage built by the production. "We needed to use a stage because we needed to do some day-for-night scenes and because the ending scene involved using fog, which we could not have controlled outdoors," says Zsigmond. "At one point, we filled the stage with smoke and it started to rain outside, which cooled the building and changed the texture of the smoke incredibly. It became layered in a way that would have been impossible to reproduce later. We caught a long shot of it, which looks so beautiful with the moonlight filtering through this amazing fog. It was just one of those lucky occurrences that occasionally happen, and we were lucky enough to capture it. We tried to do it again later, but couldn't come close to creating that same effect."

Since some shots of this night sequence were to be filmed in slow motion, with a high-speed Panastar camera, Zsigmond lit the set with ungelled tungsten lights in order to save a stop. The blue moonlight effect was later printed in the lab.

Obviously enthused by the experience he had in making *The Ghost and the Darkness*, Zsigmond credits director Hopkins for much of the picture's success, stating, "I wish all directors were as helpful as Stephen. It was a joy to work with someone who demands this kind of visual adventure." ◆

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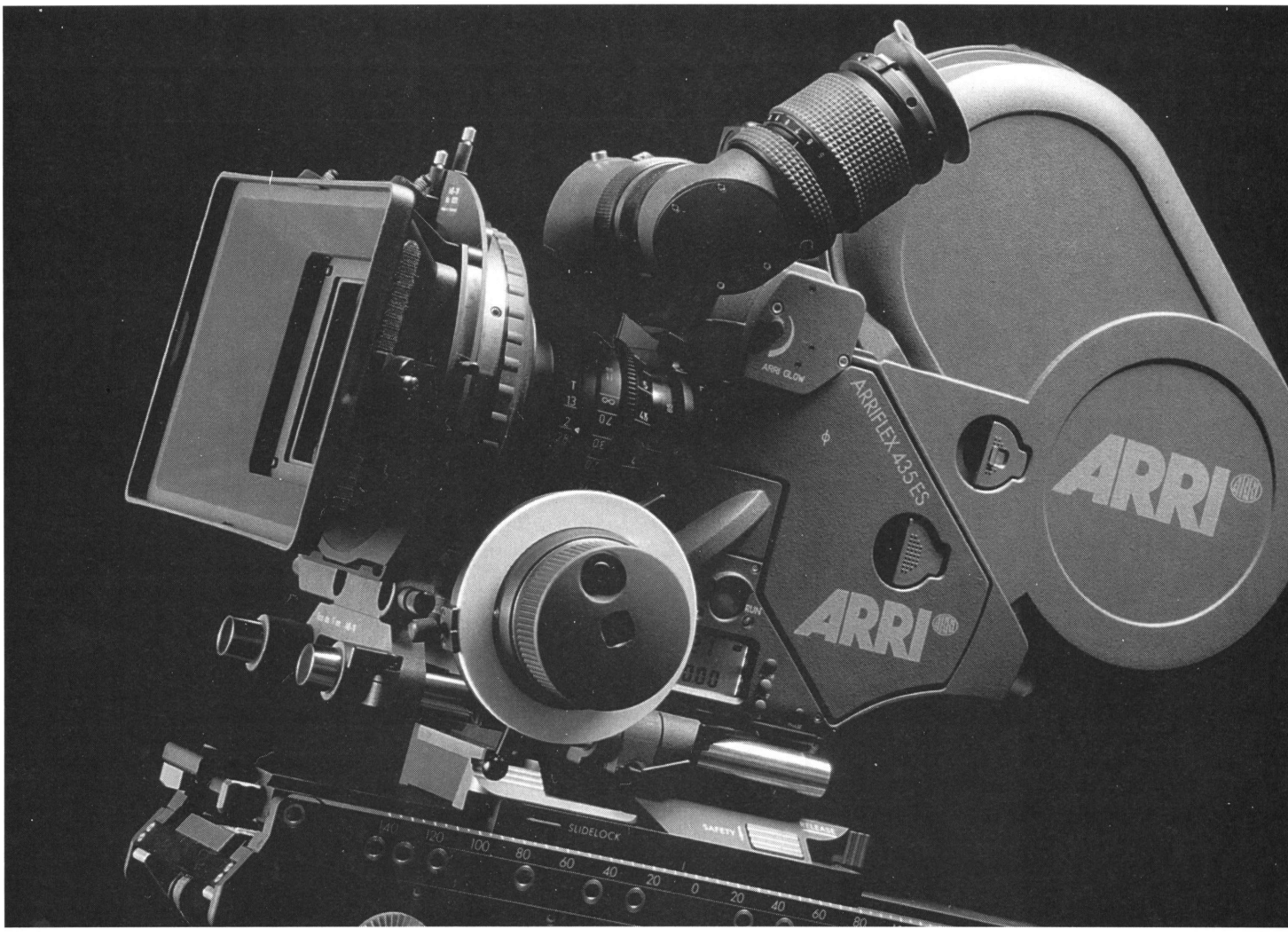

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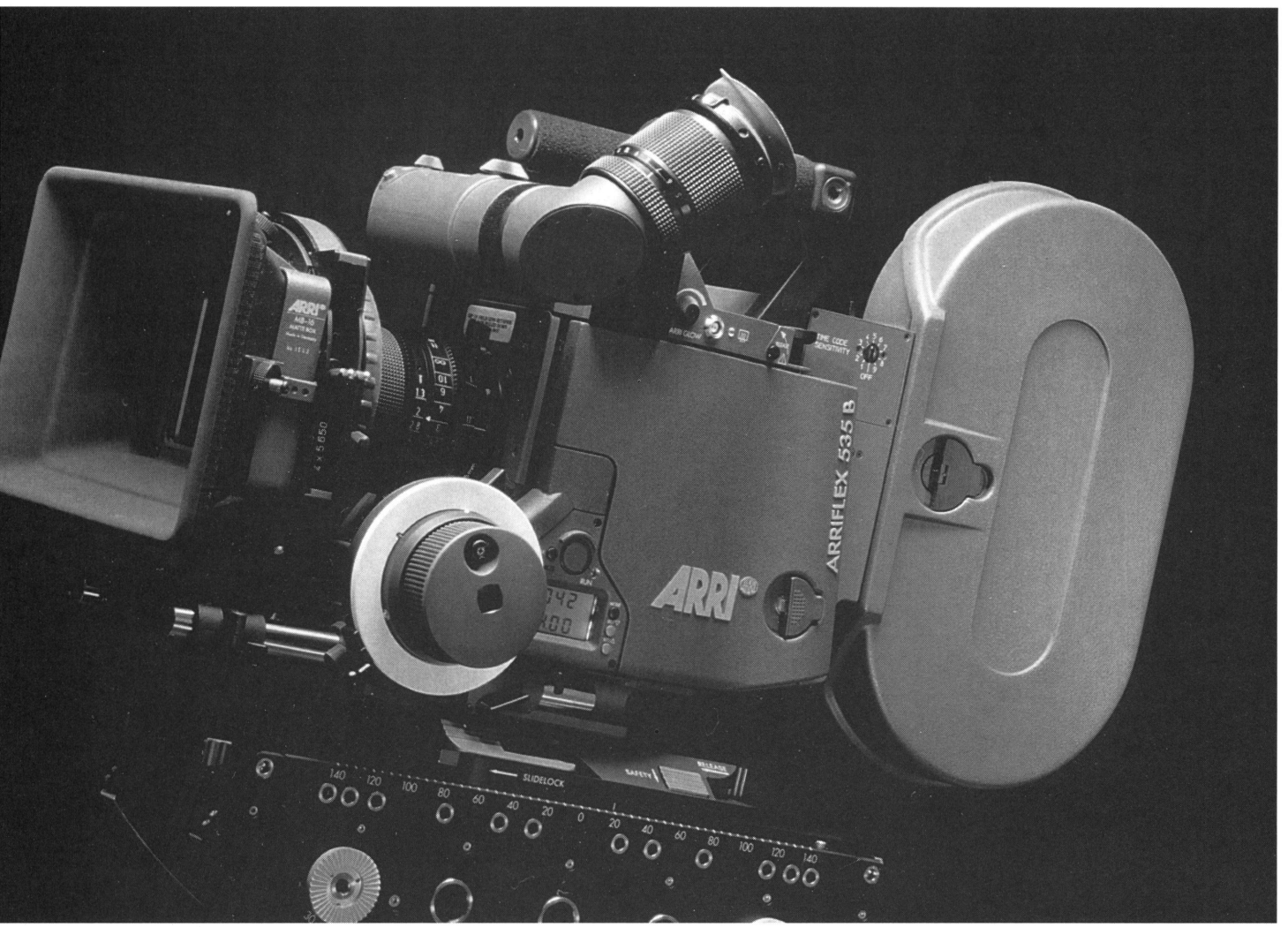

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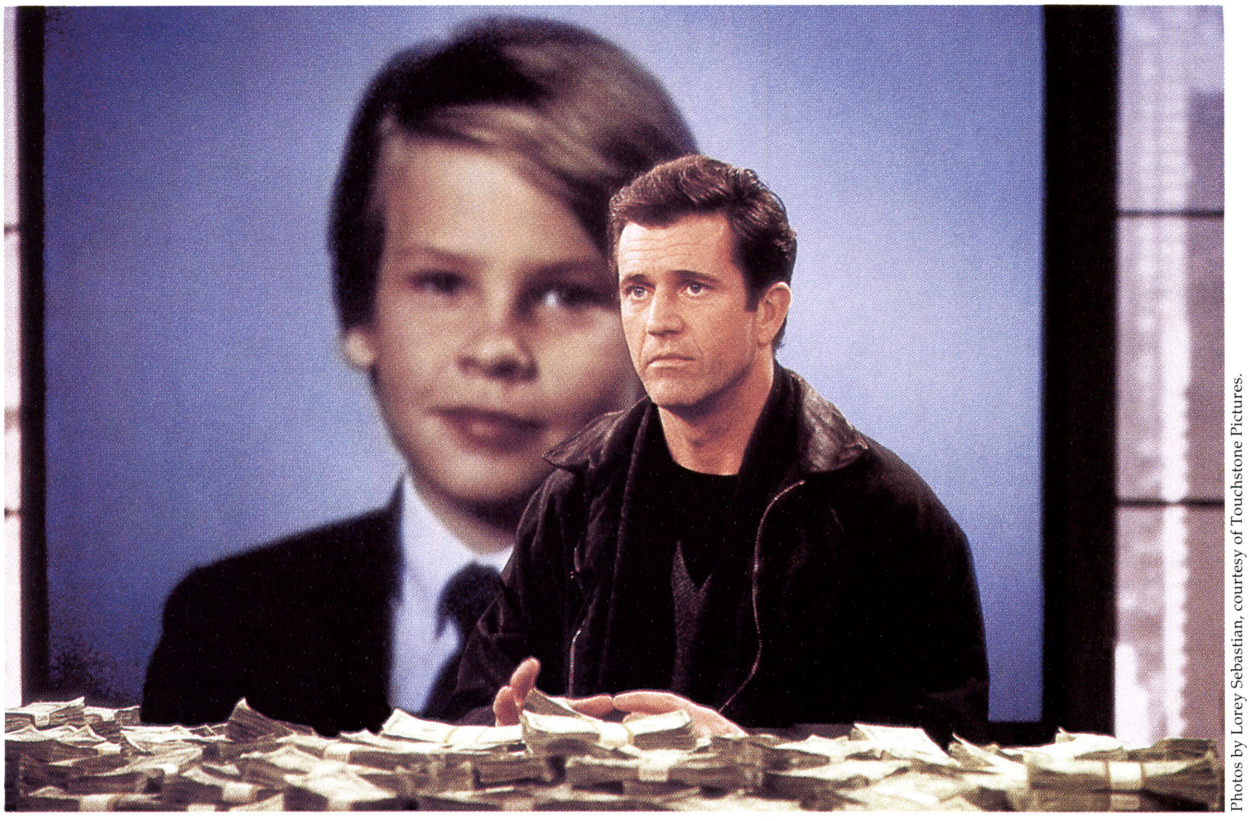


Photos by Lorey Sebastian, courtesy of Touchstone Pictures.

Shrewd businessman Tom Mullen (Mel Gibson) makes a deal for the return of his abducted son: millions to anyone who will turn the kidnappers in. Cameraman Piotr Sobocinski saw* Ransom *as an opportunity to focus on the actors' faces, and regularly lit them more prominently than he did the backgrounds.

Ransom Ups the Ante

Director Ron Howard and cinematographer Piotr Sobocinski use intriguing methods to tell a tale of kidnapping and retribution.

by Eric Rudolph

Ransom, director Ron Howard's first film since his critical and commercial success with last summer's *Apollo 13*, dives headfirst into a witch's brew of treachery. The son of Tom Mullen, a highly successful, risk-taking and not entirely honest businessman, is kidnapped from under his parent's noses in Central Park. To make matters worse, the FBI bungles the $2 million ransom drop, a gaffe that results in the death of one of the kidnappers, leading the criminals to turn against their leader. Now, both the family and the kidnappers are equally desperate. Against all advice, Mullen decides to deliver the money one more time. However, his plan is not to give the cash to the kidnappers, but offer it as a reward to anyone who will turn them in to the police.

Ransom was shot by Piotr Sobocinski, the Polish director of photography who has been lauded by cinephiles worldwide for the sensitive, evocative and beautiful images he lent to the late Krzysztof Kieslowski's haunting and intriguing *Red*, which earned him a 1994 Academy Award nomination (see *AC* June '95). The cinematographer has direct connections to the rich creative tradition of the Polish cinema. His father, Witold Sobocinski (*The Sandglass, Frantic*) is a renowned cinematographer known for his collaborations with such distinguished Polish directors as Jerzy Skolimowski, Krystoff Zanussi, Andrzej Wajda and Roman Polanski. During the younger Sobocinski's upbringing, the world of film was a constant presence in the family household. He recalls, "All of my holidays were spent on sets, sitting under my father's camera. Everything surrounding our house was movies; actors and directors were always visiting. My father never taught cinematography to me; but subconsciously I learned [from him] how to observe

and eliminate what is unnecessary from the jumble of images we see in everyday life. It is a way of approaching life, not just film. It is knowing how to choose the right angle."

Perhaps because his immersion in the against-the-odds greatness of Polish cinema was a part of his day-to-day life, Sobocinski was not always certain that he would follow in his father's footsteps. He notes, "I started painting as a child, very early. My mother was pushing me to go to the art academy, and I would've gone, but when you are 16 or 17 you can't make a decision for your whole life. At the crucial time, my father pushed me a little to go to the Lódz Film School, where he had gone.

"Lódz is a really great, great school. They don't teach you just how to make a movie, but how to live. There was a very high level of learning about history, art, painting: the whole culture of art. At the same time, they made sure we kept a free way of thinking. And we learned the most important thing for a cinematographer, which is to think about editing in the process of making a movie."

Sobocinski admits that being the son of one of Poland's most revered cinematographers was not always easy, particularly at Lódz, where the family name held so much resonance. But he maintains that "it was the best decision to go to Lódz." Sobocinski began working on theatrical features while still at the school, and served as cinematographer on his first commercial feature shortly after graduating in the mid-Eighties. However, it was not until Sobocinski was tapped by Kieslowski to shoot the third and ninth installments of *The Decalogue*, the director's modern exploration of the Biblical Ten Commandments (for Polish television) that he began to emerge from his father's shadow. Sobocinski's work on the two episodes of *Decalogue* led to his collaboration with Kieslowski on *Red*. *Ransom* is actually Sobocinski's second American feature; the first, *Marvin's Room*, directed by Jerry Zaks and starring Meryl Streep and Diane Keaton, is set for a December release.

Sobocinski is of the mind that a cinematographer can make statements with the camera that strengthen and propel the narrative. "I try to do something a little bit different in my work. I try to use what I have control over — composition, colors, camera movements and the choice of lens and aperture — to say something with the cinematography that helps the language of the film. In *Red* there are a lot of visual associations and signals which are trying to evoke a story that is parallel to the story of the film. There is no action in *Red*, so we tried, without the usual ways, to sell the subject."

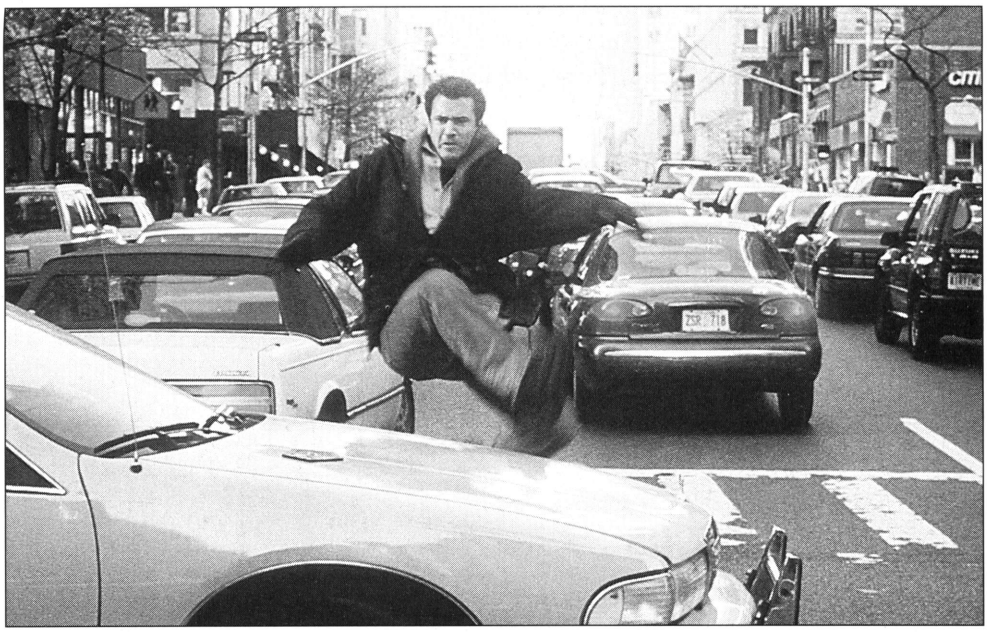
Continues Sobocinski, "I try to work with directors with whom I can be a partner. If you are truly involved in the project, and he sees that you understand his imagination and can bring it to life visually, it can become a partnership. I was as close as possible to having my imagination match that of my director on *Red*. Together, we tried to use the pictures as a language to say something that might have been a cliché if it had been said by one of the actors. This kind of communication and agreement between the director and cinematographer happens once in every 20 movies. A book is open to a million interpretations, but with film the director gives you only one interpretation. In attempting to use the cinematography as a kind of language, we give the audience a chance to interpret the movie."

By the time Sobocinski became involved with *Red*, he and Kieslowski had already established a firm creative symbiosis. Their synchronicity was so complete that not one aspect of *Red* was mapped out ahead of time through the use of storyboards; two years' worth of intense discussions were the basis for the film's intricate photographic style. But there was also the odd occasion when some of the film's visual genius was inspired fortuitously.

"In *Red*, we shot the video news footage of the aftermath of the ferry accident long before production started. I was watching the video three months before filming, because we needed frame stops of the heroes of all three films in the trio, *Blue*, *White* and *Red*, as they all end up surviving this ferry boat disaster. When we shot Irene Jacob, a fireman was crossing behind her in his red jacket, and at that precise moment she had something incredible in her face. This image is the key to *Red*.

"I said to Krzysztof, 'We have this one really big advertising billboard of Valentine (Jacob) earlier in the film; let's do something unusual with that big poster. *Red* is about the old judge who is also the young law student, and the old judge has some control over events. The image of Irene on the poster (which is identical to the ferry disaster video frame that is the last image of the film) was a way to show that from the beginning, there are connections between characters who don't know each other, and that maybe the old judge has control over the whole thing.These moments are some of the most important things which I

Director Ron Howard (top photo, left, with Gibson) felt that Sobocinski (below) "was very ambitious about using the cinematography as its own language. Subconsciously, I had experimented with that idea in the past, but I'd never worked with anyone who was as analytical about it as Piotr."



Above: ***Mullen frantically makes his way though Manhattan traffic. Shot on location in NYC and at Astoria Studios in Queens, the film made equal use of diffused lighting in exterior and interior (far right) sequences, reflecting both the oppressive narrative and Sobocinski's desire for a natural, believable milieu.***

try to provide in my films."

Ron Howard found that he and Sobocinski were on the same wavelength regarding the communicative aspects of film photography. Offers the director, "Piotr was very ambitious about using the cinematography as its own language. Subconsciously, I had experimented with that idea in the past, but I'd never worked with anyone who was as analytical about it as Piotr. It is a subtle thing; I would defy anyone to see the movie and really pinpoint, more than a handful of times, precisely how that language is working.

"*Red* was a situation where Piotr didn't have a lot of great visual locations or obvious conceptual visual situations to work with; he had to be subtle. That approach was just what I was looking for. But, of course, he was nominated for the Academy Award for *Red*, so you didn't have to be a genius to take notice of his work."

Howard also appreciated the simplicity of Sobocinski's fundamental lighting schemes. "He lights actors well, and I don't mean glamorous lighting. Both Mel Gibson and Rene Russo can be quite glamorous, but they didn't want that; they were brave in the way they allowed themselves to look as the crisis of the kidnapping mounted. It was honest, and that's the kind of actors they are. But because Piotr is such a good storyteller, he realizes the value of seeing the actors' eyes. That may sound obvious, but a lot of cinematographers don't embrace that as a priority. *Red* was very strong in terms of light balance and contrast, but when I really looked at it closely, whenever I needed to see the actor's eyes, I could."

Throughout *Ransom*, the faces are lit much more prominently than the backgrounds. This tactic comes from Sobocinski's admiration for master painters such as Vermeer, who utilized the contrast of light and darkness to influence a spectator's perception of the images.

Says Sobocinski, "The actors appear and disappear out of and into the darker background. In one step, they can be brighter than background, where a second earlier they were lost in the background. Also, as the situation grows more bleak, the whole film becomes darker and darker, but I left the faces at almost the same brightness levels throughout."

For the cinematographer, light with a natural motivation takes on enhanced believability. In *Ransom*, the illumination is not only motivated from the windows, it actually originates from them. Working on the big stage at Kaufman Astoria Studios in Queens, New York, Sobocinski rigged 1,000K Dinos and Maxi-Brutes in fixed positions on bridges high above the main set, the ceiling of which was almost never removed. Heavy frost diffusers, placed down below near the set's windows, softened and directed the light.

Says Sobocinski, "In order for the story has to be believable, you have to have a feeling that the camera doesn't exist, and that the light [is natural]. I use soft light very often because I want natural shadows, so that the light does not feel artificial."

The cinematographer found that having the lights mounted up high was beneficial since he "wanted a long distance between the lamps and diffusers, so the light would be softer. It was a huge interior, and we used a lot of light. We used 12' x 12' diffusers, which were, in effect, the lights. To move the light, we moved the diffusers, not the lights." When floor-level lights were used, he added a specially made 6' x 4' "egg crate" cap to soft lights. The deep, moveable grids of the egg crates helped Sobocinski to get key lights for two actors from one light.

Ransom was shot primarily on Kodak's 5298 with additional use of 5293; no filters were employed at any time during the production. Notes the cameraman, "Using the soft light and bouncing, I have to have enough speed to get

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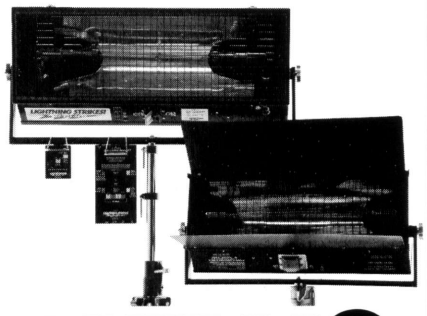

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at least T2.8. The higher-speed 98 film also lets you film things such as natural reflections — the light from a taillight or cigarette — without them being washed out by movie lights. The faster film is helpful in keeping this kind of natural feeling." (*Red* was shot on the older 500 ASA 5296. Sobocinski remarks that "in *Red*, we used a little filtration, mostly black Tiffen ProMist, one-eighth to one-quarter.")

Sobocinski and Howard wanted to convey a commonality between the behavior of the kidnappers and the victimized family; this is particularly the case in a scene when the criminals argue over to how to extricate themselves from the kidnapping fiasco. Meanwhile, Mullen is at odds with his wife Kate (Rene Russo) and the FBI operatives regarding the proper procedure for rescuing his son.

Observes Howard, "On *Apollo 13*, I tried to keep the film's three locales more or less connected at all times; I treated the story as if it were one phone conversation, or as if the characters were in the same room. Piotr and I started talking about that idea for *Ransom*. It was really fun to work with, because it was a less obvious connection, but we were able to find ways to connect the two camps."

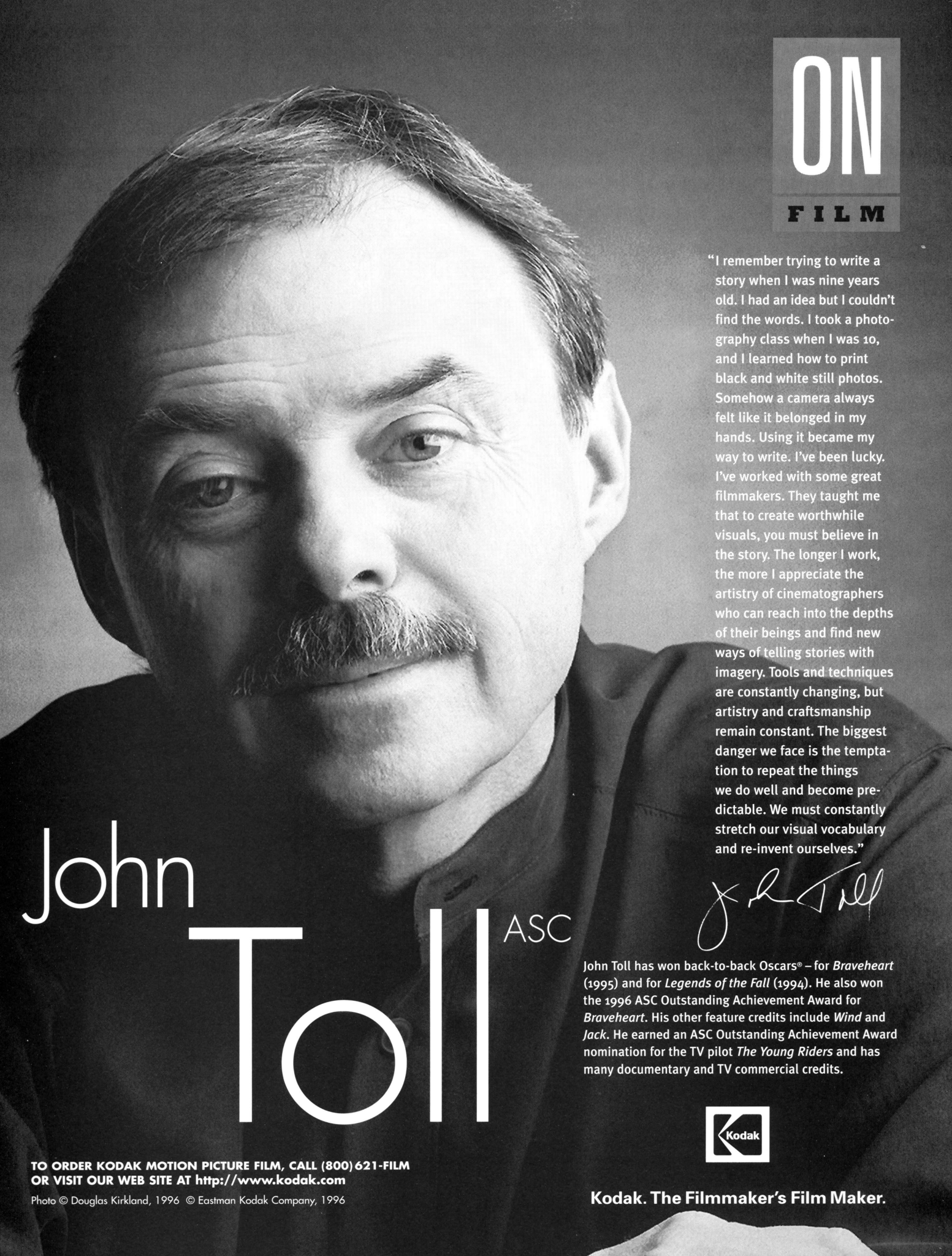
Sobocinski concurs, "At the same time that Mullen is refusing to play the kidnapper's game, and he is strongly opposed in that decision by everyone. Events have caused the kidnappers to try to convince their leader to immediately end the kidnapping, one way or another. So the family and the kidnappers are really in the same hole together. One approach to putting them all in that same hole in the mind of the audience was to eliminate establishing shots, which is unusual. Another way was to have scenes where, say, Mel is talking, looking screen right and then cutting to one of the kidnappers looking screen left. Logically, you think they are in the same room for a second."

At one point, during a dramatic phone call with the kidnappers, the Mullens are led to believe that their son has just been killed. Says the cinematographer, "We shot the reaction to this with a series of whip pans that stop on the faces of both sets of actors. At that point, most viewers become confused as to where they are, in the Mullens' home or at the kidnappers' hideaway. We were trying not to look at them as criminals and victims, but rather to see human behavior in this stressful moment."

Adds director Howard, "We worked with the Steadicam a lot and were able to take it to another level. We intercut scenes, such as phone conversations between the Mullens and the kidnappers, in a way that is subtle but I think quite effective. We'd shoot one part of a phone conversation, and the Steadicam operator, Larry McConkey, would be moving with the actors; it was improvisational and experimental. The editors put together select takes, and Piotr, the actors and myself would look at it, break it down shot by shot, and plan the shooting of the other side of the phone call scene, to sort of counter those moves. In a way, we were filming some of these verbal situations almost as if they were fights."

Another key idea that Sobocinski wished to convey with his cinematography — Tom Mullen's interior thought process — was more difficult to accomplish. Says Sobocinski, "We used a subjective camera to show his point of view, that as he is surrounded by his wife, aides and the FBI, and they are all talking to him, he is really putting together his plan. He looks at the money, then at the electronic gear. Through the subjective camera, we see that what is important to him is changing. He starts to put together the elements of his plan, and he is collecting all of this information. He is making a decision to risk the life of his own son, because he is smart enough to understand his opposition, and to know that normal methods will not work in this situation."

Mullen's intense determination to get his son back on his terms virtually consumes the psyche of the businessman. A scene in which a desperate kidnapper ambushes and attacks Kate — in an attempt to convince Mullen to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"I remember trying to write a story when I was nine years old. I had an idea but I couldn't find the words. I took a photography class when I was 10, and I learned how to print black and white still photos. Somehow a camera always felt like it belonged in my hands. Using it became my way to write. I've been lucky. I've worked with some great filmmakers. They taught me that to create worthwhile visuals, you must believe in the story. The longer I work, the more I appreciate the artistry of cinematographers who can reach into the depths of their beings and find new ways of telling stories with imagery. Tools and techniques are constantly changing, but artistry and craftsmanship remain constant. The biggest danger we face is the temptation to repeat the things we do well and become predictable. We must constantly stretch our visual vocabulary and re-invent ourselves."
John Toll ASC
John Toll has won back-to-back Oscars® – for *Braveheart* (1995) and for *Legends of the Fall* (1994). He also won the 1996 ASC Outstanding Achievement Award for *Braveheart*. His other feature credits include *Wind* and *Jack*. He earned an ASC Outstanding Achievement Award nomination for the TV pilot *The Young Riders* and has many documentary and TV commercial credits.
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drop his turnabout plan and simply pay the ransom — emphasizes his obsession. The nastily injured spouse is seen in a close-up from above. The next shot shows Mullen staring down in deep concentration, presumably at his injured wife. However, it is revealed in the next shot that he is really studying his son's bloody t-shirt, which the kidnapper left with Kate after assaulting her.

Explains the cinematographer, "You connect these shots, and you are sure, for one second, that Tom Mullen is looking with great concern at his injured wife, but he is not. He is making sure it's really his son's shirt, and thinking about what the red stains indicate, and what it all means regarding his next move."

Notes Howard, "I tried to play the movie from the parents' point of view, even if it was just a scene of the FBI planning strategy. From a psychological and dramatic standpoint, the scenes were always about them and what it was like to go through this. I wanted to make *Ransom* as substantial as possible; it's as if you're along for the ride. I wanted to make the movie more involving, exciting and psychological. Piotr was always talking about how important the psychological aspect was, and I agreed with him."

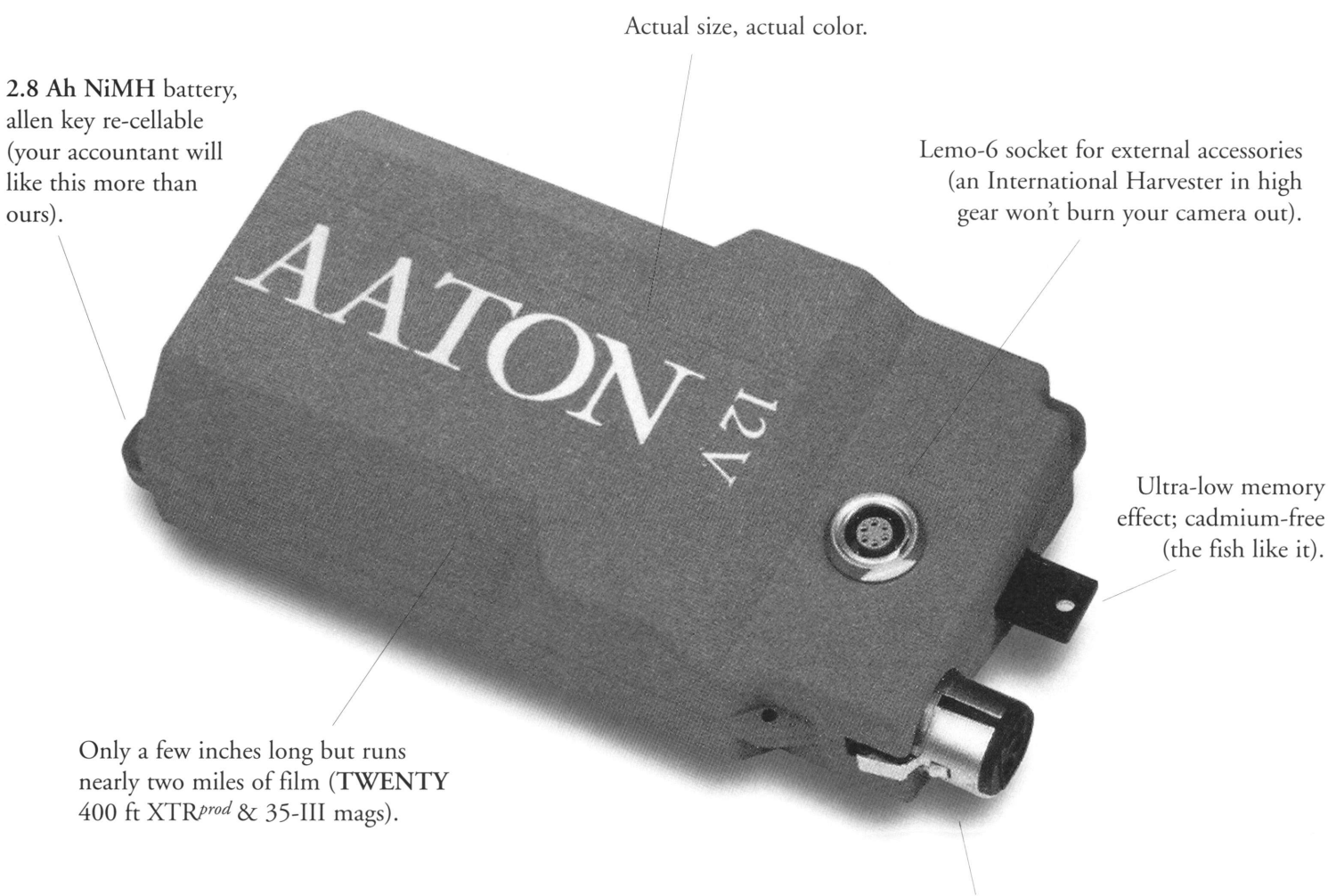
A crucial characteristic of Sobocinski's work is his philosophy towards color. The cinematographer states that every hue he uses has a particular meaning, depending upon the character or dramatic situation in which it appears. After reading a script, Sobocinski will mentally divide it in terms of color. Thus, there is a finite number of shades that will appear in any film he shoots.

Expounds Sobocinski, "The main background on *Ransom* is the color brown, the color of the woods. Brown is the gentlest version of red, and those two colors play together very well. This subtle color contrast works for me; I also simply like to use red. The kidnapped kid has a portable radiator that glows red in the room where he is held. This room is the deepest place in the metaphorical 'kettle' that the family and the kidnappers occupy together. Red is also an important connection between the child and his captors. One gives the boy some red cough medicine, which he spits up on his shirt — a similarly placed red image is later used when the that person meets her fate. Also, in a key scene, [another kidnapper's] face is bathed in an eerie red light [suggesting his role in the crime]."

In detailing another specific example of the motivation of *Ransom*'s color scheme, Sobocinski says, "I wanted to stop time with color at the moment when the Mullens realize that their son is missing in Central Park, which happens in late afternoon. [In the shot in which Kate Mullen realizes her son is missing, the sky behind her glows an ominous, deep red.] That type of late afternoon light is warm, so we used dark, warm interior wall colors. I also like [those colors] because they reduce light spill, which helps me to better control my light."

Due to the somber nature of the narrative, many of the exteriors, especially in the first half of the film, are dark and depressing, like a really ugly, gray early winter day in New York City. Concedes Sobocinski, "I tried to keep this depressive atmosphere, this negative feel. Outside I eliminated most of the skylight, which was consistent with the interiors, where I used teasers and flags to darken the top of the frame as the drama becomes more intense, as if the ceiling were pressing down on the actors. As the film goes on, it is getting darker out and there is a little more contrast in the film. This works because it is a small story about a closed world, where we slowly lose control of who is who and where we are in this crazy situation."

The early part of the year in New York City is traditionally a dark period, but the gloomy weather was not reliable enough to assure Sobocinski easy days while shooting exteriors. "We didn't have too much luck. At one point the kidnapper is waiting to go into an ambulance. We had to shoot that scene in two parts because of Mel Gibson's illness. [The actor had an emergency appendectomy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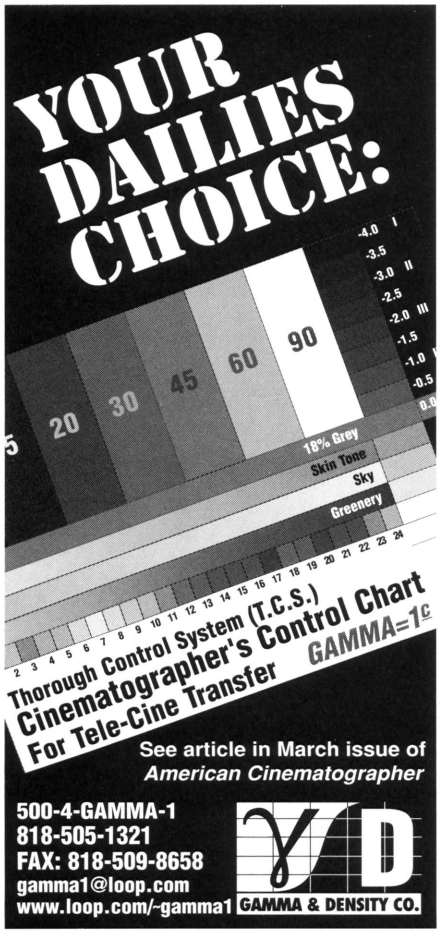

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that kept him out of the filming for several weeks.] When we shot the first part, without Mel, we had full sun, so we built a big black shade against the sun. The next month, when Mel was back, we were shooting the other side of that scene and it was raining, so we did the same thing, building a huge shield against the rain."

Though Sobocinski has described *Red* as containing no action, much of *Ransom* is an exercise in kinetics. But the filmmakers opted to take a more realistic, documentary-style approach toward the action scenes. Says Sobocinski, "Some of them, especially the final scenes, are shot in what I call 'CNN style,' like you see on TV news when something unexpected happens suddenly. This style in a feature film triggers a memory in your head; you remember some news footage you saw that was shot that way. That thought reinforces the idea that what you are seeing on screen is real. You can identify; it's not like watching some fantastic movie, like one of the *Terminator* films, which are done perfectly in that action-movie style. Sometimes when it's done too perfectly, you go out of the moment and feel nothing inside.

"This movie works from the inside; it is playing on the strings of all parents. To make this work, we had to go from the inside out. We built the story with good action, but the action is the shell of the egg; what is important is what is inside of Tom Mullen's mentality. The film is not about the action; it is about 'where is the limit of the capacity of human beings to deal with one of the most extreme situations that can happen to anyone?'"

In keeping with this verité-type ideology, Sobocinski took an unusual approach to the start of the film's final, chaotic action scene. He describes, "There was a camera on a dolly, and for the transition shot just before the action begins, the operator grabbed the camera off the dolly, during the shot, and started shooting handheld. So suddenly we go from a smooth dolly shot to handheld, running with 100-150mm lenses. It was appropriate; the scene is calm, and then it erupts. We stayed with longer lenses, handheld, for the rest of the scene. Up to that point we had avoided a handheld camera."

Adds Howard, "That was Piotr's idea. It is actually kind of subtle on screen, but it shifts the action to a higher gear and intensifies it. This was consistent with our desire to modulate and orchestrate the camera movement in a way that worked for the story."

When working in Europe, Sobocinski favors Arriflex cameras (particularly the BL model) with the full series of Zeiss prime lenses, and often does a lot of his own operating. However, the cameraman has had to alter his shooting style somewhat for Stateside features.

Says Sobocinski, "Operating the Arriflex BL you can be together, it is like [being with a] woman. Here I have operators and use Panavision. Working in the States, operators are more of a necessity; you have to work faster and the days are longer, so it is tough to both light and operate well. You have to have an operator who understands you and has a similar point of view, not just someone who can move smoothly from point A to point B. I was fortunate on *Ransom* to have a good operator in Bruce McCallum. Still, when working in the States I will sometimes operate on shots that technically are not that difficult, but for which you must have a certain feeling. Also, we always have two cameras on the set. We improvise to find something between a group of people talking, and I operate the second camera whenever possible."

Though Sobocinski has been offered directing assignments, for now he plans to quite happily continue his career as a highly sought-after cinematographer. Remarks the cameraman, "Cinematography is sometimes like a time machine. On one movie you can be in the 18th Century, and on the next you can be in a world that no one has ever seen before. Being a cinematographer is beautiful work, and a beautiful job." ◆

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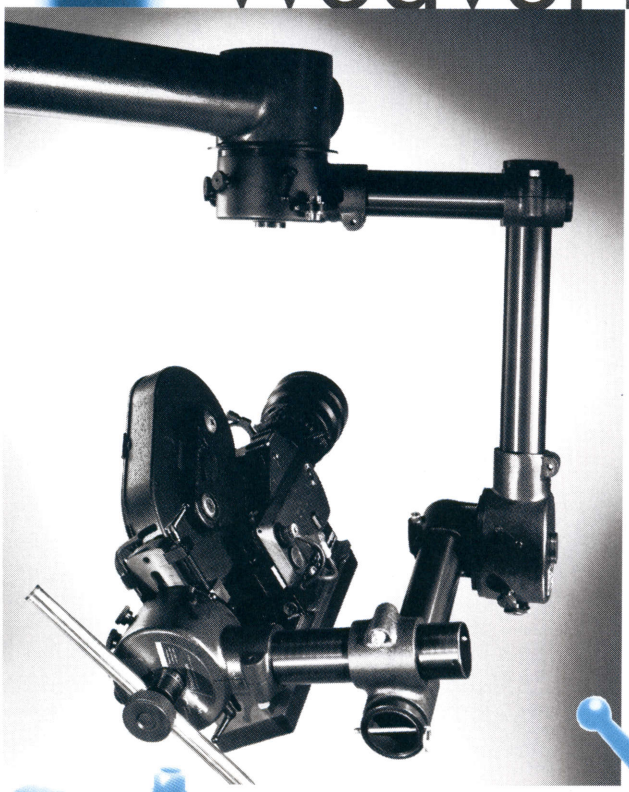


Proud men on the march. The ensemble cast of* Get on the Bus *prepares to embark upon a voyage to the historic Million Man March. Observes cinematographer Elliot Davis, "Personally, I looked at the march as a continuation of the political and cultural education an American should go through. It was an opportunity for a lot of white Americans to get an insight into black culture on a mass-media level."

Over the course of his decade-long career, director Spike Lee has made a name for himself by tackling subjects that mainstream America considers controversial. After addressing the phone-sex industry this past spring with *Girl 6*, Lee set his sights on a biography of legendary black baseball player Jackie Robinson; he'd hoped to have the film in theaters to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the date when Robinson cracked the major leagues' color barrier. But when the project's financiers, Turner Pictures, put the film into turnaround, Lee was left somewhat in the lurch. However, an alternate project, the planned release date of which would also be commemorative on a cultural level, surfaced soon after.

Film producers Barry Rosenbush, Bill Borden and Reuben Cannon approached Lee with a concept concerning a busload of black men who make a three-day road trip from the First AME Zion Church in Los Angeles to Washington D.C. to attend 1995's Million Man March. Once Lee agreed to direct, plans were put into motion to release *Get on the Bus* in October, on the one-year anniversary of the march. Although Lee himself didn't attend the march (he was in a hospital recovering from knee surgery), the monumental event had a profound impact on the director, who watched the historic proceedings on television.

Says Lee, "The assemblage of black men across all classes was a part of American history that day; it was a great day, and I'm glad we've been able to forge a narrative out of that. The men [in the film] learn, along with the audience, why each individual is on this bus. Each one has different reasons, different expectations of what's going to happen at the march, and different views about Minister Farrakhan. So just as the million-plus black men bonded, you see the eventual bonding of the men on the bus too."

For *Get on the Bus*, Lee had to seek out a new cinematographer since he and Malik Sayeed (*Clockers, Girl 6*) "couldn't get it together this time." Late last March, two weeks prior to principal photography, Lee brought aboard Elliot Davis, a cinematographer whose prior experience on low-budget features had impressed him.

Davis has been nominated for the Independent Feature Project's Best Cinematography Award for Alan Rudolph's *Equinox* (see *AC* April '93) and Steven Soderbergh's neo-noir *The Underneath* (1995). It was Davis' deft use of cross-processed Ektachrome 5239 reversal film on the Soderbergh film that prompted Lee and Sayeed to do the same for much of *Clockers* (*AC* Sept. '95). The fact that Davis happens to be the first Caucasian cinematographer to shoot a feature film for Lee didn't faze the director in the least.

Says Lee, "I've worked with white directors of photography on music videos, so that never

Magic *Bus*

Director Spike Lee and cinematographer Elliot Davis take a cross-country trek to the Million Man March in *Get on the Bus*.

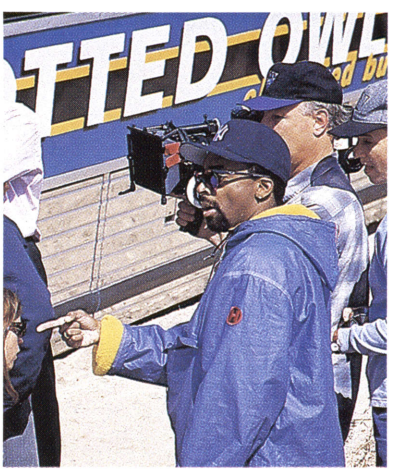
by Andrew O. Thompson

entered my thinking. You have to realize that this is a very low-budget film [$2.4 million] and that we only had 18 days to shoot it. A group of 15 African-American men financed the film — actors like Wesley Snipes, Danny Glover and Will Smith [as well as the film's screenwriter, Reggie Bythewood, producer Cannon, actorRobert Guillaume, attorney Johnnie Cochran, and eight other black businessmen who contributed investments of $100,000 or $200,000]. I was responsible for making sure that their money wasn't lost. I would have been a fool to have picked a cinematographer just because he or she was black. I had to get the best people possible; I wanted to make a good film and at the same time I wanted people to get a return on their investment — this [type of fiscal arrangement] could prove to be a great avenue for African-Americans to finance their own films, so our model had to be a success."

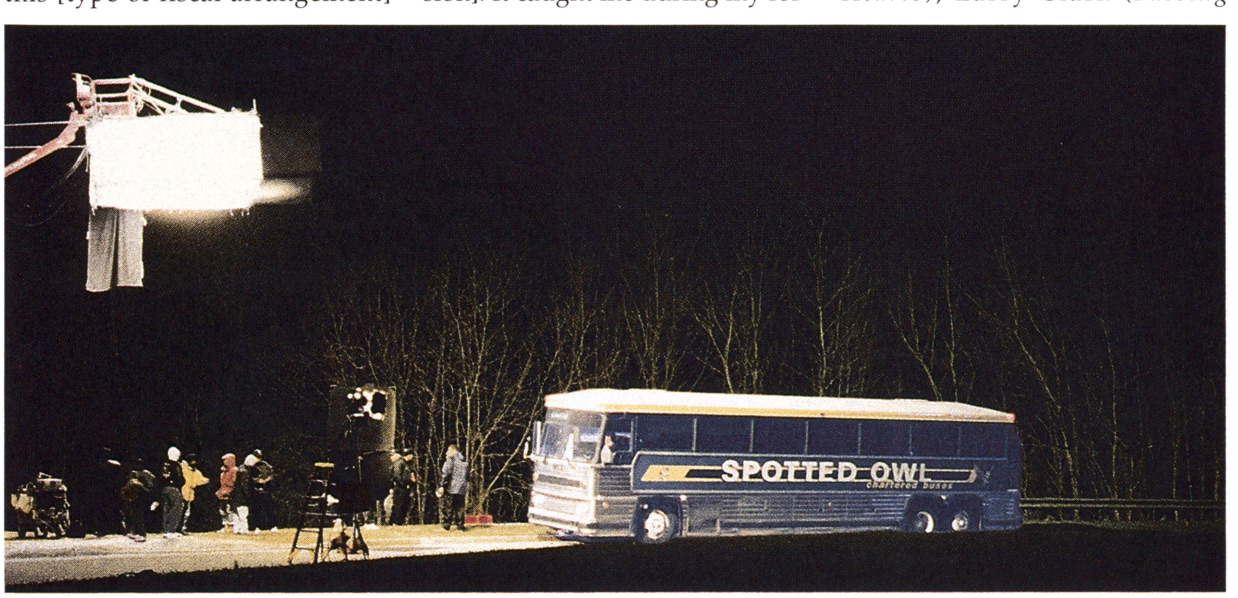
Davis welcomed the opportunity to work with Lee on a film that held such historic resonance. He had previously served as director of photography for such independent black filmmakers as Charles Burnett (on *The Glass Shield* and *Night John*) and Haile Gerima (on his award-winning *Harvest: 3000 Years*, which entailed two months of location filming in Ethiopia). Davis had also been a candidate to shoot Gerima's recent transcendental slave narrative *Sankofa*.

Offers Davis, "I've been highly influenced by black filmmakers, but I don't know if that was a factor or not [in Lee's decision]. It caught me during my formative years at UCLA in the Seventies when there was a very highly charged political consciousness to which I was sympathetic, and became involved with. That gave me a certain kind of background that helped me prepare for films like this."

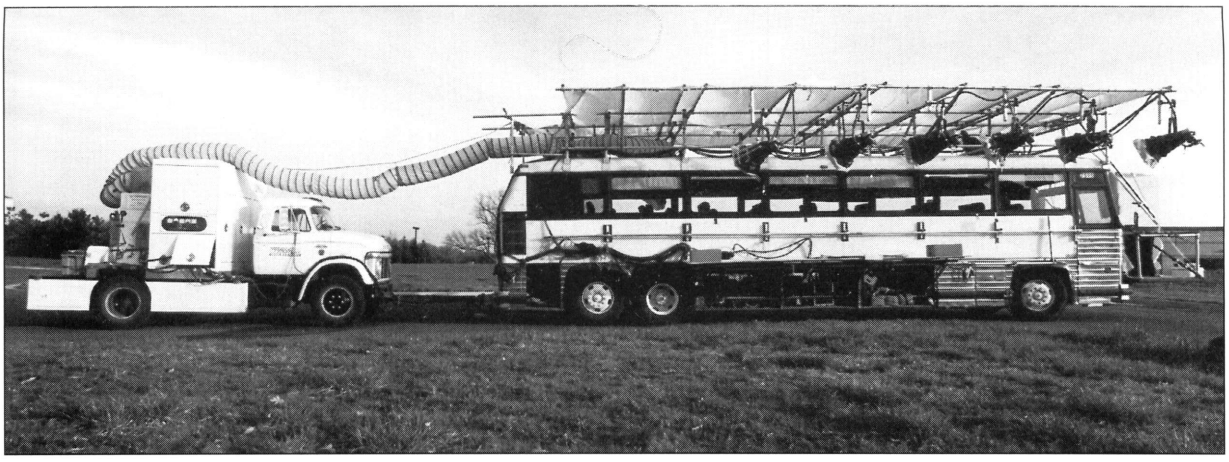
Davis enrolled in UCLA's Graduate Film Program after receiving an undergraduate degree in architecture from Virginia Tech and the University of Virginia. During his tenure at UCLA, the film school's student body had a burgeoning wave of black filmmakers in its ranks. Touted by academic historians and cultural critics alike as the "L.A. Rebellion," these directors included, along with Burnett and Gerima, Julie Dash (*Daughters of the Dust*), Billy Woodberry (*Bless Their Little Hearts*), Larry Clark (*Passing*



Immediately below: ***Director Spike Lee explains a set-up to Davis (with the Aaton-16mm III perched on his shoulder) and camera assistant Kate Butler.*** **Bottom:** ***The coach makes an impromptu stop so that two feuding passengers may physically air out their differences. Wanting this altercation to resemble a boxing match, Davis illuminated the scene with a custom-fashioned light box comprised of 12' x12' frames and grid cloth coated in yellow gel with six 2.5K HMIs blasting from within. The surrounding forest was then backlit in blue. Explains the cinematographer, "Blue and yellow were often set against each other as complimentary colors because of the tension that they create. I don't use colors decoratively, but rather as emotional forces."***



Photos by Lester Sloan, courtesy of Columbia/TriStar Motion Picture Companies.



Right: ***The fully rigged bus, as designed by Murietta, CA-based Coach Engineering sits on a road in Manassas, Virginia. To facilitate silent running, the vehicle was pushed from behind.*** **Lower right:** ***The gutted interior of the bus during the rigging process. Track was installed in the overhead luggage racks. Behind each seat, Davis placed light boxes that he fashioned out of halogen lamps, spree cloth and color correction.***

Through), Ben Caldwell (*I and I; An African Allegory*), Jamaa Fanaka (*Penitentiary*) and Alile Sharon Larkin (*A Different Image*).

Davis notes that his scholastic years also infused in him an appreciation for Cuban, Chinese and African cinema thanks to interaction with his classmates. He recalls, "It was a very eclectic mix of people, and if you were open to it, you could learn a lot about America. Film school wasn't nearly as important to me as the people who were there. That was my education, because when these people talked about film, they spoke about how it affected their culture and community, the impact that it held, and how Hollywood altered or created false realities in terms of their culture."

Davis's first professional cinematographic project entailed six episodes of Jacques Cousteau's documentary *Oasis in Space*. Following *Harvest: 3000 Years*, he earned his first commercial credit on Michie Gleason's *Broken English*. Davis says he prefers to work with those directors who "need the system but aren't interested in working within it." He has been a frequent collaborator with Alan Rudolph (*Love at Large, Mortal Thoughts, Equinox*), Steven Soderbergh (*King of the Hill, The Underneath, Gray's Anatomy*) and Yves Simoneau (*Memphis*, the TV mini-series *Cruel Doubt, Mother's Boys*). Davis' additional feature credits include *Summer Heat, Bloodhounds of Broadway, Bright Angel, The Cutting Edge, Things to Do in Denver When You're Dead*, and *Larger Than Life*.

In a throwback to Lee's 1986 debut feature *She's Gotta Have It*, which was budgeted at $175,000 and filmed in 12 days, the director opted for a shoot-from-the-hip style for *Get on the Bus*. This strategy was almost unavoidable, as much of the film's events occur within the cramped confines of a Greyhound-style coach.

Says Lee, "We wanted the audience to feel as if they were on this bus. The style is very documentary-like, therefore we knew a lot of stuff would be handheld. We also didn't want to spend a whole lot of time lighting; we just wanted to have one [permanent] general lighting system and a couple of auxiliary lights, so we could just shoot."

A major factor in camera choice was the ensemble nature of the film. With 14 to 15 actors bantering back and forth, it wasn't uncommon for Lee and Davis to deal with some seven to eight pages of script per day. There are also some moments in the film when actors essay extended pieces of dialogue, such as the closing sermon by bus driver George (Charles Dutton), which lasts nearly 11 minutes.

Says the cinematographer, "Even with the Moviecam SL, you can only get three and a half minutes out of [a 400-foot mag]. That was a drawback because it could hamper the acting style of those who are extemporaneous and spontaneous — just when they're starting to get good, you run out of film. So we started looking at 16mm, because you get 11 minutes with each 400' mag. Also, we could get the camera into places on the bus that we couldn't with 35mm simply because of the size of the equipment. [A 16mm camera] is lighter, and because the movie is almost all handheld, I needed easy control of the zooms. Both the logistics [of the production] and the style lent themselves to 16mm, which kept everything looser."

Lee eventually settled upon the Super 16 format, as it offered a 1.85 aspect ratio and retains more image quality during the blow-up process to 35mm than normal 16mm. There had been some discussion of combining 16 and 35mm, but that idea was rejected because Lee prefers not to edit on video. To edit a 16/35mm mix on celluloid would necessitate that the entire 16mm workprint be blown up to 35mm as well.

The Aaton XTR-Prod was Davis' chief camera. His lens package featured 8-64mm and 11.5-138 zooms, as well as a set of high-speed Zeiss primes. Additional

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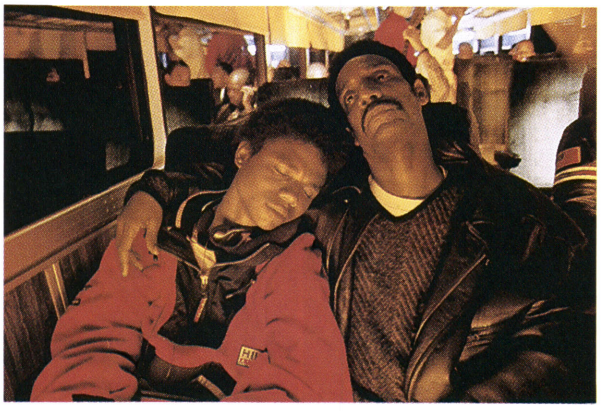
Right: ***Davis and assistant Butler block out an interior shot of the bus from the outside of the vehicle. Says Davis, "The windows were kept clear and the outside was two to four stops over. The exposure on the inside was taken by exposing the person deepest inside the bus to whatever light was falling on him from inside of the window. This person was allowed to go as hot as he possibly could — either he'd burn out or be fine."*** **Center:** ***Strict father Evan Thomas (Thom Byrd) cradles his sleeping son Junior (DeAundre Bonds) during one of their more peaceful moments. The bus interior's warm amber glow was achieved by shining 2.5K HMIs through adjustable yellow muslin shades.***

scenes in black-and-white were shot with a Russian K-3 camera on 7222 Double-X stock. Inserted into this collage is footage from a Sony Hi-8 camera, ostensibly taken by a character named Xavier (Hill Harper), a UCLA film student documenting his journey to the march.

The dominant film stock for *Get on the Bus* was Kodak's 7298. Scenes set inside the bus were filmed on 98 pushed one stop, effectively rated at 1000 ASA.

The exteriors of the bus shot around the AME Zion Church in Los Angeles were photographed on 7293 to establish a sense of the mundane. Davis then expressed the escalating tensions among the travelers by tweaking the film's contrast and grain.

The cinematographer also utilized Ektachrome 7239, which he printed as negative for two sequences in which a crisis forces the disparate group to unite. The first scene depicted in the 160 ASA reversal stock was shot in the desert outside of Lancaster, CA, where the bus breaks down, forcing its passengers to disembark and wait for a replacement vehicle. Notes Davis, "On *The Underneath*, I shifted the Ektachrome toward blues and greens because that was the palette of that movie, but 7239 tends to have a yellow cast, which in that sense worked for us being in the desert. I overexposed it one stop and pushed it one stop so it had a very gritty, high-contrast look."



Says Davis of the reasoning behind this strategic use of film stocks, "We wanted the film to have a look that was not exactly 'grit,' but more like it was being 'cooked.' On *The Underneath* I did that with color — blues, greens and yellows. But on this film, the process was more about texture. We wanted [viewers] to be able to feel the film, to have something between them and the screen that would elicit an emotional response.

"One thing we try to establish in the film is that the travelers' world is with them wherever they go. That's why the 7298 wasn't pushed for exteriors. Inside the bus, I tried to keep their world as constant as possible because it wasn't something they could escape. Outside of the bus, they would have different experiences which would be reflected in different film stocks and different treatments of the film."

The vehicle itself is part of the fictitious Spotted Owl bus line. According to production designer Ina Mayhew (*Wigstock, Clockers, Girl 6*) this moniker is meant to draw parallels between the endangered bird species and the plight of black men in America. The logo emblazoned on the side of the bus was rendered in blue and yellow (the film's primary palette) so that it would be instantly recognizable.

The rigging of the bus's exterior was the domain of Coach Engineering, the Murietta, CA-based company that performed similar duty on *Speed*. A space-frame grid mounted on the roof of the bus extended the lights six feet out from either side of the vehicle. A total of 13 2.5K HMI Pars were aimed through the windows on each side the bus — seven on one side and six on the other. The top of the space frame was layered with gridcloth so Davis could also allow diffused daylight to stream in. Surrounding the bus was a four-foot-wide platform, on which lights and/or the camera could be placed when necessary. Davis likened the bus to "a moving soundstage" since he could shoot from any vantage point around the vehicle, including through the removable front windshield. To facilitate sound recording, the bus was pushed along by a truck, which additionally carried an air-conditioning unit (to maintain a hospitable temperature inside the coach despite Davis' broiling fixtures). An on-board 800-amp generator powered both the lighting and the AC unit.

To lend the bus's interior a warm ambiance, Mayhew installed adjustable yellow muslin blinds on each window. A long strip of double-tube blue fluorescents lined the ceiling, which itself was covered with silver paper to reflect light back onto the principals. The seats were positioned to allow for maximum window space. Davis

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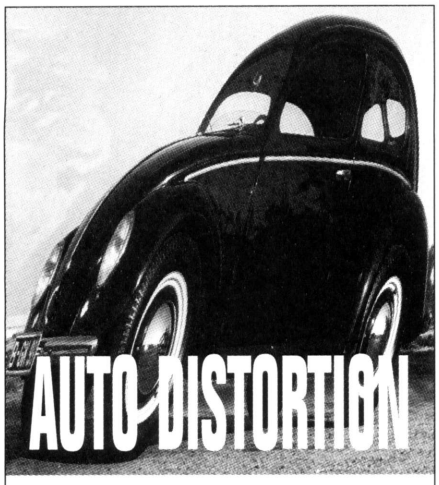

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Inside the "redneck" restaurant that production designer Ina Mayhew located outside of Nashville. She and Davis enhanced its mood by stringing carnival lights across its neon-filled interior.

then situated dimmer-controlled light boxes (halogen lamps covered with grid cloth and color correction) on the back of each seat; the light boxes functioned in both day and night, and facilitated eye lighting and shadow detail. The overhead luggage racks were removed and replaced with movable Plexiglas panels that permitted the placement of dimmable MR-16 practical units for nighttime filming. The structures of the overhead luggage racks were used to support track for an adjustable underslung dolly rig that ran the entire length of the vehicle.

While shooting the bus interiors, Davis had to contend with the fact that the actors' skin tones ran the gamut of African-American shading, from blue-black to high-yellow. To assure the sharpness and clarity of facial details, the cinematographer tried as often as possible to avoid placing the actors against light backgrounds; such a jarring contrast could draw viewers' eyes away from the subject.

Ina Mayhew did her part to solve this dilemma by regularly clothing the actors in muted tones. Though there were some hints of burgundy and other shades of red, blue was avoided, as that was also the shade of the bus seats. She notes, "Everybody was of equal status, so once you put someone in bright red or bright blue, either they fade into the seating or pop out too much, and that really wasn't what it was all about — one person standing out more than anybody else."

Davis compensated by giving the darkest person "the break on the light," meaning that he would have the actor face the key lighting source. Lee often obliged his cinematographer by arranging the cast's seating so that the actors with the darkest skin sat directly across from the windows through which the 2.5K Pars shone. Explains the cameraman, "Exposure on the inside of the bus was determined by taking a reading of the darkest-skinned person in the center of the bus and going with that as the overall exposure [the exposure outside ran 2.5 to 3.5 f-stops over]. The person closest to the window was allowed to go as hot as two to three stops over. Spike and I allowed this to be part of the style of the film. Having black skin, the actors were able to take the light a lot better than their white counterparts would have. In

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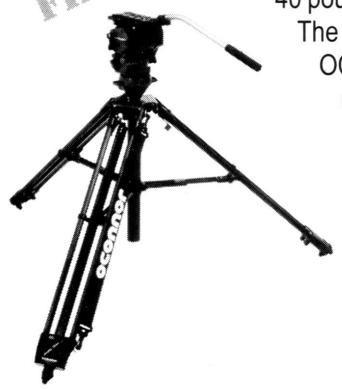

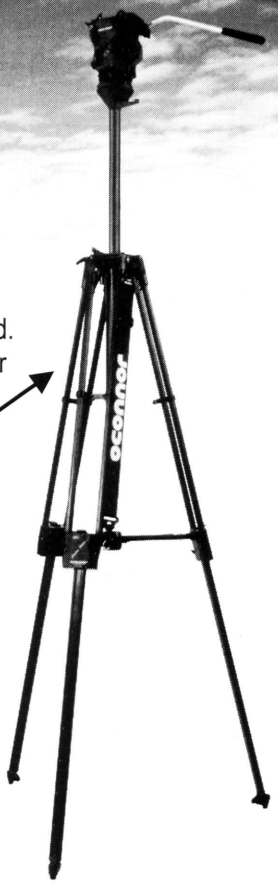

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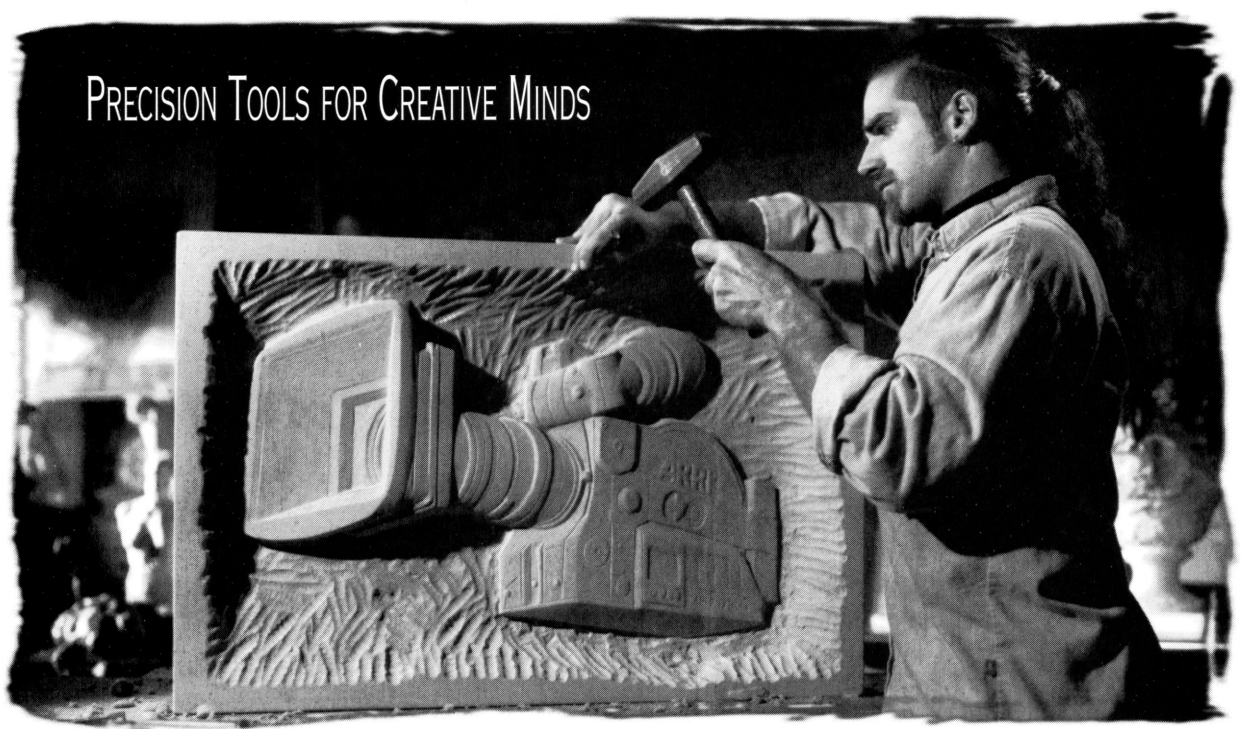

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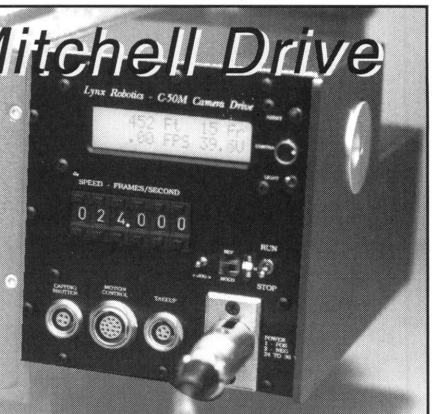

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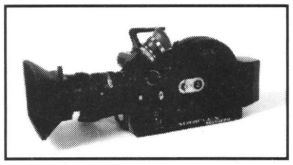

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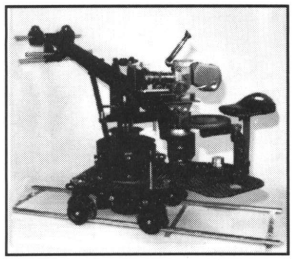

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that way it was helpful, but there were times when I paid for it in terms of shadow detail inside the bus, so it was a trade-off."

Davis experiments with color as an emotional force, in a manner he compares to that of Impressionist and abstract Expressionist painters. For him, the significance of a specific color is determined by the context in which it's set. He and Mayhew worked in tandem to devise a palette that held as much meaning as the selection of film stocks, even if it was relegated for the most part to two contrasting shades.

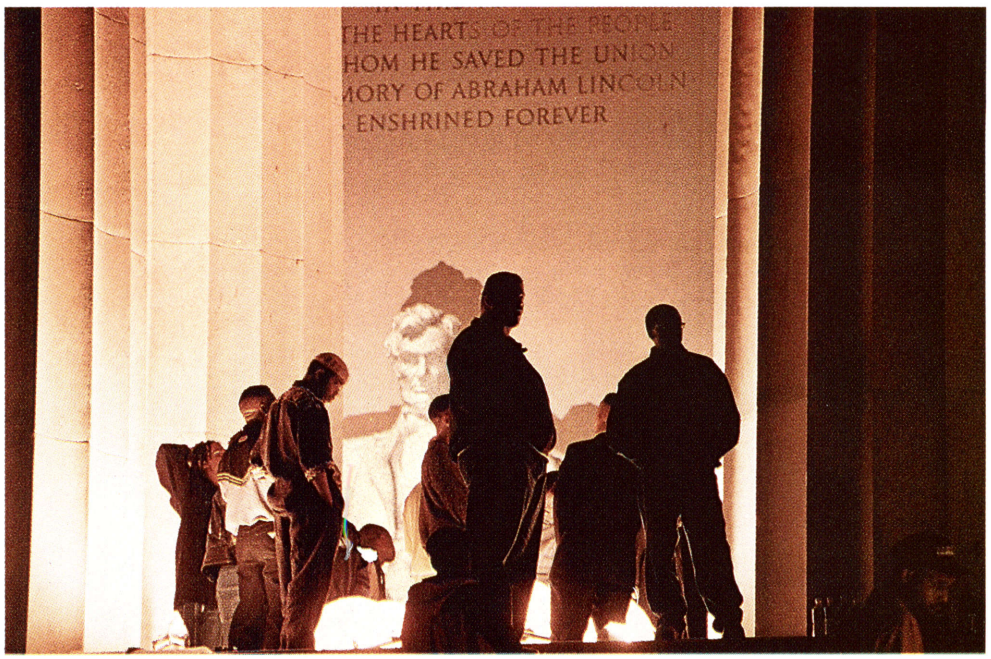
Says the cinematographer, "Blue and yellow were often set against each other in the movie as complimentary colors because of the tension they create. I'm not a big proponent of decorative color. I use color in a big enough quantity so that it crosses an emotional threshold. Once you cross that threshold, you can feel the color. Seurat developed a system of color using complimentary shades; Mark Rothko, in his abstract Expressionism, set vast amounts of color against each other to elicit emotions; and Van Gogh abstracted reality with color. So in a lot of movies that I shoot, I use color as actual emotional triggers of themes — not like Christmas lights."

In *Get on the Bus*, a color change from yellow to blue, or vice-versa, signals an emotional progression. During George the bus driver's concluding speech on the importance of being committed to one's racial community, the cold glare of the vehicle's overhead blue fluorescents makes way for rays of warm yellow light streaming through the windows. The transformation of hues is also used as an indication that one member of the group is isolating himself from the others. When the dreadlocked photographer Kyle (Isiah Washington) challenges the arrogant Hollywood actor Flip (Andre Braugher) to a fistfight (after becoming fed up with the thespian's taunts about his homosexuality), the ensemble's members situate themselves in a clearing suffused in a deep yellow glow emanating from an overhead lightbox. (Davis says that the glow

was meant to simulate a boxing ring. The apparatus was constructed out of five 12' x 12' frames covered with grid cloth; it contained six 2.5K HMIs and was swathed in yellow gel.

Moments after Kyle and Flip cease their hand-to-hand duel, the defiant Junior (DeAundre Bonds) flees from his stern, often absentee father Evan (Thom Byrd), and this monochromatic yellow milieu. He runs into an adjoining forest backlit in complimentary blue and inundated with smoke for a fog-like effect. The woods were lit with Dinos and uncorrected 12K HMIs on Condors stationed atop of a hill pointing downward into the trees, creating a silhouette that enveloped all those engaged in the search for the youth. Warm light is not reintroduced into the sequence until Junior is found.

The film's brief production schedule precluded the possibility of an actual nationwide road trip, so when the cast and crew completed work in one location, they flew to the next. Shooting took place in Los Angeles, portions of Tennessee and Virginia, and Washington, D.C. Exteriors of the bus, aside from the scene set in the desert, were shot in northern Virginia thanks to the diverse surroundings of that state's highways; the shooting itinerary took a circular loop that began in Mannassas and went southwards. Since a great deal of the journey transpires after dark, the production easily circumvented the problem of vistas that didn't match the look of the state that the bus was supposedly tra-



The Lincoln Memorial coda, lit by photofloods and chinese lanterns.

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versing. Nighttime interiors of the bus were shot on a soundstage in Nashville, Tennessee utilizing "poor man's process," a method of effecting darkness on a black stage with lights simulating the headlights of oncoming and receding traffic.

Scouting locations proved somewhat arduous for Mayhew, as she had to locate an area and execute her designs with the crew always mere days behind her. For a surreal scene in which the travelers stop at a restaurant populated by what at first glance appears to be a clientele of stereotypical Southern rednecks, the production designer had two days to acquire a suitable site in Tennessee. While canvassing the area with a member of the state's film commission, Mayhew stumbled upon a log-cabin-type structure about an hour south of Nashville. It so fulfilled her expectations that what little dressing was required merely enhanced the eatery's decor.

Recalls Mayhew, "It was overly neoned and featured every kind of Budweiser and Miller beer sign ever made. In the area where the dartboards were, there was so much Budweiser signage that it became a product we could promote in the film. We then put in twinkle lights [25- to 40-watt bulbs strung together] everywhere — on the poles, the ceilings, and around the bar area. Instead of neon, we put up a lot of thin fluorescent tubing just to capture that bare-bulb feeling. This place was the joke of the movie with everything being so over the top, but [the scene] is supposed to have a sense of humor because everybody is getting along."

The greatest coup scored by the crew of *Get on the Bus* was obtaining permission to shoot a climactic nighttime prayer scene on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. After months of finagling a date that would fit within the production's schedule, a snafu in communications led to all of the memorial's lights being suddenly shut off. Davis had to improvise a lighting scheme, a dilemma compounded by the decree that nothing could touch the monument's pristine marble surface.

Emphasizes Davis, "We used a very lightweight package. We lit the prayer group with a 6' x 6' butterfly frame loaded with chinese lanterns on dimmers, around which all of the men are gathered. The statue was lit with three juniors; one hit Lincoln while the other two raked the adjoining columns. Outside, 300-watt photofloods positioned on the ground worked as ditch lights that illuminated the columns."

The cinematographer is currently on location in Louisville, KY working with director John Duigan (*Flirting*, *Sirens*) on *Lawn Dogs*, a tale of class conflicts related from the perspective of an 11-year-old girl. And though Spike Lee currently has no new projects on deck, Davis says that he would relish the chance to collaborate with him again, remarking, "Though I'd heard many stories about him, I was always positive with Spike and about Spike. In shooting this film, I was forced to break out of the visual habits and aesthetics that I'd fallen prey to. Artistically, I found the entire experience to be very liberating." ◆

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The Eye Behind the Lens

Top feature film camera operators discuss their pivotal relationships with directors and cinematographers.

by Christopher Probst

The critical role of the camera operator is perhaps one of the most dynamic, political, and frequently misunderstood positions on any feature film set. Uniquely empowered with a tremendous amount of influence and responsibility over how a film is shot, the operator is entrusted to realize the creative intents of the two most powerful figures on set: the director and the cinematographer. The balancing act that the operator performs daily is also subject to many permutations of individual personalities and working styles.

"Every combination of director and cinematographer is different," says operator Paul C. Babin who has served such directors as James Cameron (on *The Abyss* and *T2 3-D*), Steven Spielberg (*Always*), Peter Weir (*Fearless*), Francis Ford Coppola (*Jack*), and Barry Levinson (*Bugsy* and *Toys*) — assignments which teamed him with such ASC members as Mikael Salomon, Russell Carpenter, Allen Daviau, John Toll, and Adam Greenberg. "It ranges from directors whose primary concern is performance, and give secondary attention to the use of the camera, to directors who are very specific and dictate every shot, focal length, where the camera's going to be and where it's going to go.

Likewise, there are some cinematographers whose primary concern is light, and who leave it to me to work out the shot with the director, while there are some others whose concern with the focal length and camera movement is very strong and who want to have control over that.

"I'm there to synthesize what the director wants, what the cinematographer wants, what the actors are inclined to do, and what the design of the shot is at its heart. I try to make it all work at the moment the film is being exposed. Therefore, I try to do a lot of listening. I listen to the director, because he's the boss and it's his vision; to the director of photography, who's faced with the technical challenge of fulfilling the director's vision; and also to the actors, because sometimes the director and cinematographer miss their feedback. And within that context, I try to add my thoughts at the appropriate time. I've found that the most experienced directors honor that and really value my input."

Just exactly who determines the dynamics of a given setup depends on any given number of variables, but it is ultimately the operator's duty to achieve the shot. "First off, I like to come in prepared," explains Conrad W. Hall, son of the esteemed cinematographer Conrad L. Hall, ASC. The younger Hall has operated for his father on *Jennifer 8*, *Love Affair* and director Robert Towne's upcoming *Pre*; for David Fincher and Darius Khondji, AFC on *Seven*; for Simon Wincer and Robbie Greenberg, ASC on *Free Willy*; and for Wincer and David Burr on *The Phantom*. "Not only do I thoroughly read the script throughout preproduction and then the night before — and I also read the sides [a specific actor's lines of dialogue] on the day of shooting — but during the rehearsals I try to think as if I were directing the film: 'Okay, what's this scene about? What are the key moments?' Then when I come in and block the scene with the director and the cinematographer, if we're missing a particular beat that I feel is important, it's my job to ensure that the shots are doing what we hope they will do.

> "A good operator is also an interpreter. When I look at a shot, I can often get a feeling for how it will best work for the story. Hopefully, that intuition is what the writer, director and cinematographer want to show."
>
> — Doug Ryan

"So I'll talk over the blocking with the director and first establish what's important for me to look for in the scene. I want make sure that when he looks at me after a take, I'm not just saying, 'Yeah, it was in focus and properly framed.' I want to look at him and say, 'I liked that one.' I want him to know that I'm going to be there as another set of eyes looking for the same elements he's looking for."

"A good operator is also an interpreter," says Doug Ryan, who operated for Stephen Burum, ASC on *The Untouchables* and *Body Double*, assisting in the cinematographer's long-time collaboration with director Brian DePalma; for Don McAlpine, ASC on such films as *Clear and Present Danger* (directed by Philip Noyce), *Man Without a Face* (Mel Gibson) and *Mrs. Doubtfire* (Chris Columbus); as well as for Dean Semler, ACS on *Last Action Hero* (John McTiernan). "When I look at a shot, I can often get a feeling for how it will best work for the story. Hopefully, that intuition is what the writer, director and cinematographer want to

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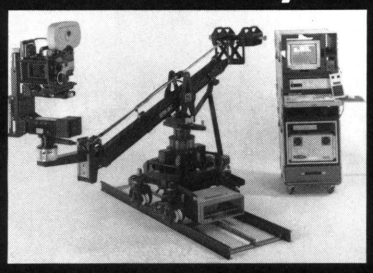

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show. No matter what the shot is, the operator is there to help them reach their vision of the story. Once I'm behind the camera, I am responsible for what comes through the lens. Sometimes the director of photography will indicate, set up or rehearse the shot they'd like to execute and then leave it rough for me to fine-tune.

"I prefer to execute a shot properly on the very first take and then leave it up to the director to do as many takes as he wants with the talent to bring the scene to the point where he wants it. Rather than having the first takes be about executing the shot, I try to anticipate as many problems as possible, because things will naturally come up. 'What do I have to look out for here? Where do I have to look out for things getting in the frame? What gear should I be in for this move?' I want to be able to hand that moment over to the director and director of photography so that they can concentrate on their work. It's a team effort. No shot is made on your own."

Vancouver, B.C.-based operator Rod Pridy has operated on such Canadian-shot television projects as *The X-Files* and *Millennium*, (for cinematographers John S. Bartley, CSC and Peter Wunstorf, respectively); on *The Hitchhiker*, with such then-emerging talents as directors Philip Noyce and Paul Verhoeven and cinematographer Francois Protat; as well as on the feature *We're No Angels*, for Philippe Rousselot, AFC.

Pridy performs his job under Canada's adopted "English" director-cinematographer-operator system, in which the operator collaborates closely with the director to work out shots, while the director of photography tends primarily to lighting. This method, says Pridy, "essentially places you in the middle. I'm looking after both the director's and the director of photography's interests. I certainly want to satisfy the cinematographer and help him out as much as possible in where he wants to place the lights, but I also want to help the director realize his vision. With the English system, I find that the director's collaboration with the operator becomes a very specific concentration for him and enables the operator to recognize and understand the director's concept and what he wants to see. Whereas, [during blocking] with the director of photography, there's always the consideration of, 'Okay, where do I place my lights?'

"I find that with a lot of American cinematographers, when they set up or choreograph a shot, quite often it becomes something that is affected by where he can put his lights mechanically, instead of accepting the shot and then finding some way to light it."

"It all depends upon what kind of cinematographer you have," elaborates Michael St. Hilaire, who operated for Adam Greenberg, ASC on *Terminator 2*, *Ghost* and *Eraser*; Russell Carpenter, ASC on *Hard Target* and *True Lies*; Lajos Koltai, ASC on *Home for the Holidays*, *When a Man Loves a Woman* and *Wrestling Ernest Hemingway*; and Dariusz Wolski, ASC on *Crimson Tide*. "Some cinematographers like to line up their own shots with the director, and the operator is not as involved in the process. However, I like to be involved. So now, during a job interview, I'll state, 'If I'm just going to hit the switch and keep somebody in frame, find somebody else.'

"Operators can get pushed aside unless they actively get in there and try to do things. Moreover, I feel that the operator should come onto a picture earlier so that he has the understanding of the director and the first cameraman and knows what they're going after. The more the operator is involved, the more valuable he is to the cinematographer, which creates more free time for the cinematographer to do his lighting. I wish American directors of photography would adopt more of the English system. It also would certainly make it easier for American operators to become cinematographers."

Obviously, for an operator, having a solid compositional aesthetic and thorough understanding of how the images marry in the editing process is of the utmost importance.

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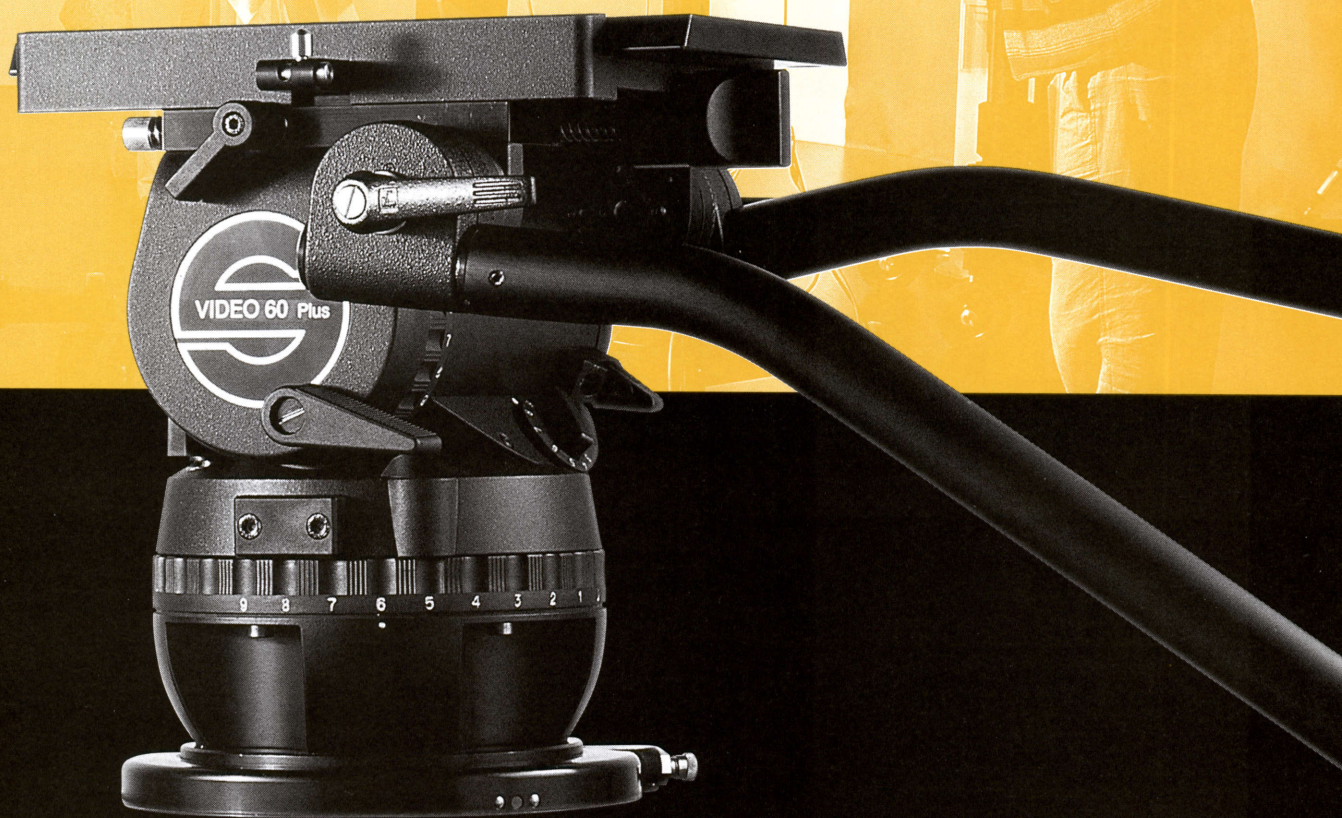

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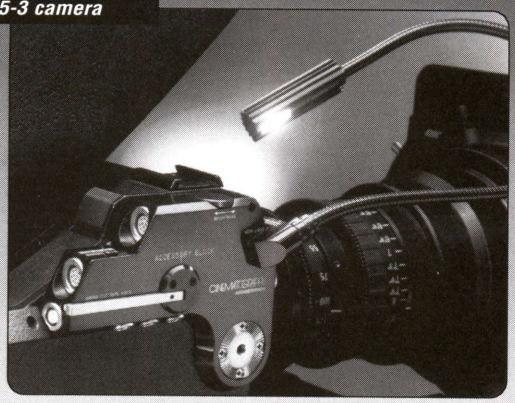

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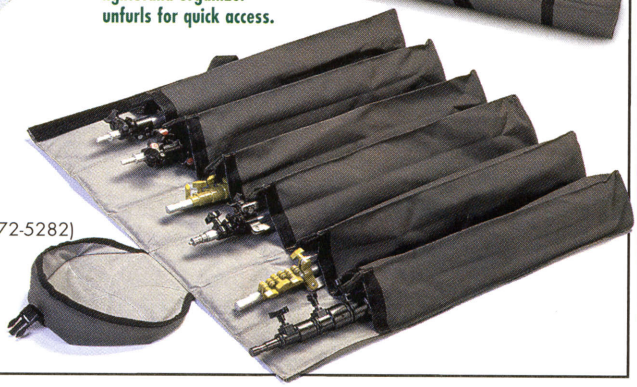

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"An experienced operator should know screen direction and have a working knowledge of editing," St. Hilaire maintains. "I've seen operators save directors from having to come back later to get a cut that he didn't originally think about because the operator was on his toes and happened to think of the shot then, rather than having to come back and relight the set and do it later."

Relates Hall, "I'm not one of those classic guys who likes to put the camera right smack at eye level. The first thing I do is look at the sets and think to myself, 'What would the cameraman like to do here? How is the cameraman going to light it? Can I put the camera where it's user-friendly for lighting, perhaps where a window can light the shot or we can place practical sources?'

"I'm very unconventional when it comes to master shots. I believe that when you're framing a shot, it's not just a shot about actors, it's a shot about the room that these actor appear in. I love architecture, so I fight for architectural elements in the shot. I may stick two people on the edges of frame and leave them there for an entire shot if I believe an interesting element exists somewhere else in the frame."

Offers Ryan, "So much of what we do is based upon experience, and often there is an internal dialogue going on inside that you don't even think about. On one hand, you don't want to think a lot about what you're shooting; you want to be able to go with what's happening in front of you. If you get too tied up in the concept, you'll probably get faked out. But you always need to be looking at focus, checking the edges of the frame to make sure that they're clear of objects, and then possibly anticipating a move or getting ready for a change in your body position. There's a part to learning composition that you can study — there are accepted conventions you can follow — and then there are aspects of it that are intuitive and just feel or look right. Hopefully, that intuition looks good to the people you're working for.

"Also, there are the subtle

changes that you may make in composition for the format you're working in. In the widescreen or 1.85 format, you might make subtle changes with the headroom and with the way you use the space. You also may make subtle changes in your compositions, given the tone of the scene or the film itself. If I'm doing a comedy, I tend to treat the frame a little differently than I would a hard-edged drama. I'd certainly frame *The Untouchables* differently than I would frame *Mrs. Doubtfire*. They're just two different kinds of films, even though they're in the same format.

"A short time into a production," he continues, "you may find that the director or cinematographer might ask you to do something that seems a little more extreme than you might do. So you make adjustments in your sensibilities. Maybe they see headroom a little differently. You just make that adjustment and then try to tune into what they're attempting to accomplish with their film. And once you do that, you might encounter a refreshing new way of looking at things."

Opines Babin, "You either have composition in you or you don't. I've been painting, drawing and visiting museums since I was a teenager; the world of composition has always been part of my life. It's pretty well mapped out and instinctual to me. So I try to pay attention to what the focus puller is doing and keep a sense of what the actors are doing so I can be a source of feedback to the director — provided he wants my feedback, which most do. Every once in a while, I do have an opinion about a light or two, but usually the cinematographers I work with are the best in the business and know exactly what's going on.

"Also, I try to make my operating as unobtrusive as possible [according to] the basic rules we're all aware of — movement with movement. If the actor's moving, that's the time to move the camera if you need to. There are other times when you let the actor play the frame and not adjust with him."

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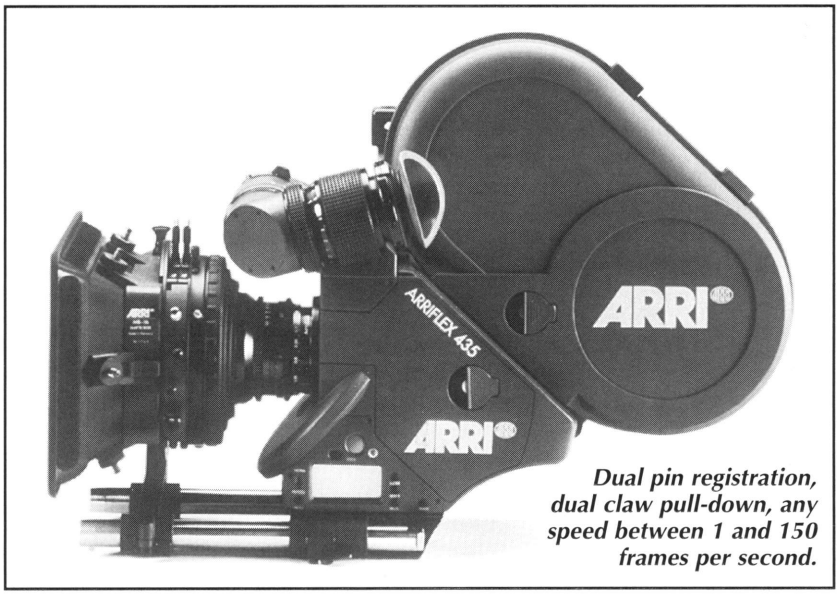

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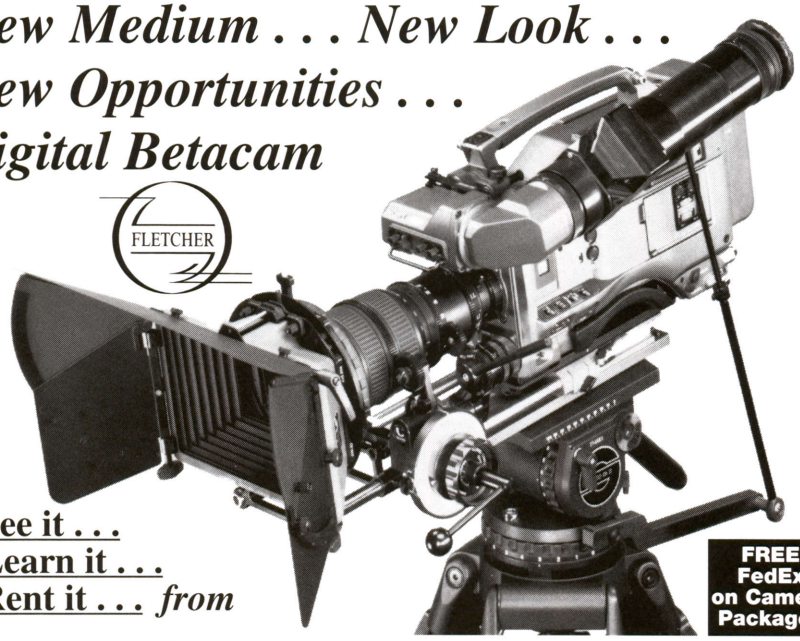

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the lens, it's incumbent upon the operator to assure that the visuals are not only composed interestingly, but that all aspects of hair, makeup, wardrobe, and practical special effects are working to the benefit of the shot. Relates Pridy, "From a technical aspect, I always consider the background, because any time you confuse the audience in terms of being able to identify backgrounds, it's going to take their attention away from the performance.

"There was a period when everybody was shooting wide open because selective focus was the 'big' thing. I was never a fan of selective focus because I found that if there was anything in the background with detail, your mind wanted to go to that, identify it, and then come back to the action. At the same time, you have to watch the cinematographer's work and help him out. Because your eye is to the lens, it's your responsibility to pay attention. For instance, you need to try to maintain continuity in the level of smoke in a scene if the crew is using fog.

"A lot of what I do is subconscious — it comes from a feeling inside," he continues. "But a lot of it has to do with angles, what you can make of architecture, what you can make of the geography of where you are. In the end, all of the planning, all of the preproduction that goes into creating the sets and blocking a scene, comes down to what the actors feel: what they want to do with it, what they feel their characters are, and how they would behave in a given situation or environment. That will often dictate what the camera does. One arrangement I have with my focus puller is that he will not shut the camera off until I take my eye away from the eyepiece. Because quite often, the most wonderful moments will happen after the director says cut. The actor may be adding a look or an action that was unplanned, but you have to allow actors that latitude."

Submits Hall, "One of the first things my father taught me was to really try to get inside the head of the person you're working with. When I was a first assistant, I was always trying to think like an

operator so that I could better help the operator do his job. So when I became an operator, I felt confident that I knew what the job was, and I approached that position in the same way — as a servant to the cinematographer and the director. As an operator, the first thing I need to do is understand who the cinematographer is and who the director is and what it is that they expect of

> "As an operator, you're right in the thick of egos; some of them are tender, some of are strong, some are intimidating and some are intimidated. You have to tread with purpose and with care."
>
> — Paul C. Babin

me. I then adapt myself to whatever style they work in so that I can help them do their jobs better. In that regard, now that I'm a camera operator, I'm totally thinking like a cinematographer. It's my job to make sure that the shots work for the director and that the lighting works for the cinematographer. Knowing what each person wants, I'm able to say, 'Hey, perhaps this light needs to come around a little,' or to point out that a certain light is a little too bright, or too dark, or whatever. And incidentally, that's probably one of my strong suits. There are guys who can pan and tilt the pants off me, but I think my eye and my efforts in the storytelling are my strongest qualities, and those abilities are what I'm hired for."

One point on which all the operators agree is the need for decisive, precise, and efficient communication between the operator and those around him. Offers Babin, "The ability to communicate succinctly and clearly to the actors, director and director of photography is one of the key elements of operating. I definitely agree that 'brevity is the soul of wit,' and it's one of the best tools in your bag. As an operator, you're right in the

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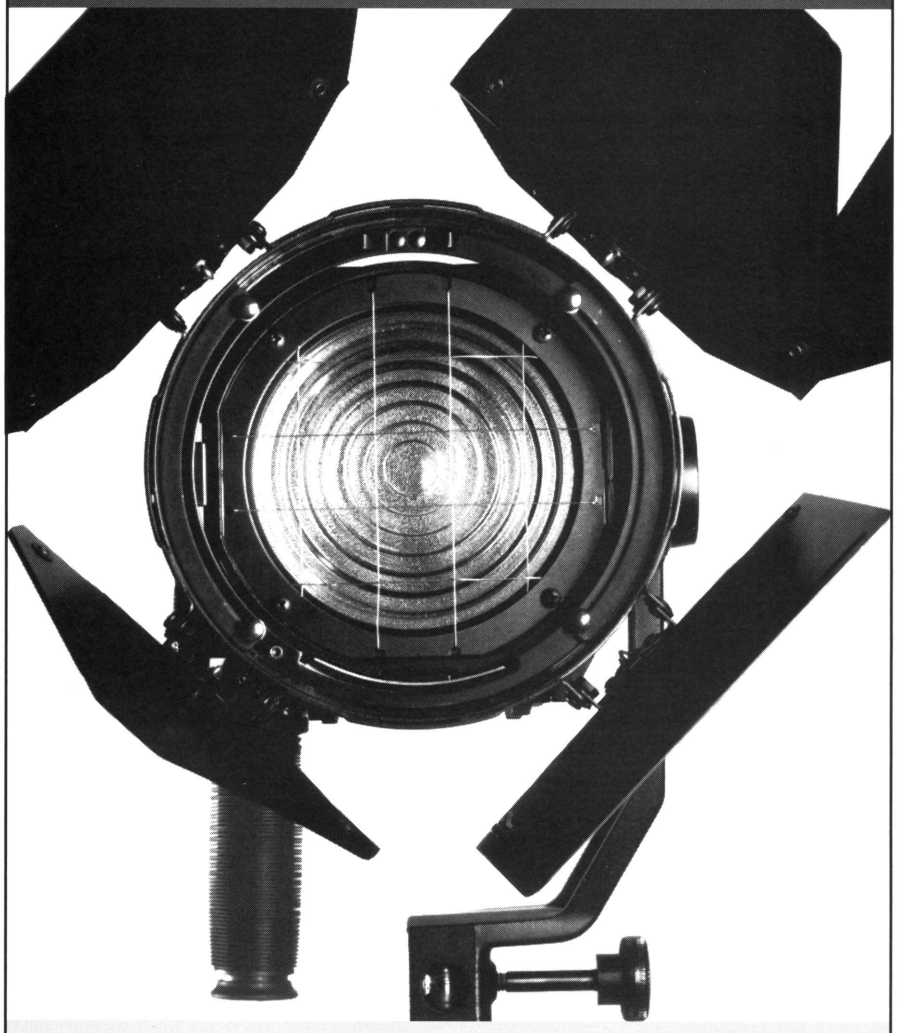

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thick of egos; some of them are tender, some of are strong, some are intimidating and some are intimidated. You have to tread with purpose and with care."

Expounds St. Hilaire, "About 10 to 20 percent of being an operator is actually framing a shot. The rest is getting along with people and getting the job done. You can spend more time on the set than you do with your own family, so you have to have a little fun! I carry a kazoo and a whistle in my bag, and every time somebody starts to go off, I'll zip the kazoo. I like to keep a happy mood on the set, yet still have everybody focused on the shot. When it comes to the shot, you turn everything else off."

Remarks Hall, "A film set can sometimes be a negative place. Because I'm on the camera, which is kind of like being in the position of the quarterback, I try hard to create a positive air and a good-natured feeling during the shoot. If I can create a good feeling on the set, then the day is going to go well. I think the most important thing my father taught me is that we are here to have a good time. I pass out compliments as much as I can and make people feel good about what they do. I want people to go home feeling they had a good time, and I think I can be a major contributor in that regard, because the camera is basically the focal point of the set."

It's not surprising that directors and cinematographers often demand to work with the same operators again and again. When all of the elements come together effectively, the camera operator's value as a contributor on the set cannot be measured merely by the number of nicely composed shots. Summing up his feelings, Pridy concludes, "Peter Wunstorf gave me a photograph of us after we finished *Millennium* on which he had written, 'Thank you for letting me see my dreams come true through your eyes.' Another director I worked with I [summed up the relationship] perfectly, saying, 'Four eyes become two eyes, [which] become one eye." ◆

Black-and-White All Over

Veteran production designer Assheton Gorton discusses his role on Disney's live-action version of *101 Dalmatians*, and how it helped support cinematographer Adrian Biddle, BSC.

by John Gainsborough

Assheton Gorton, production designer on the new Disney live-action version of the 1961 animated film *101 Dalmatians*, is all too aware of the essential artistic symbiosis on any film. As he remarks, "I always think that the art department is the left hand of the director, and the cinematographer the right hand, and you need both to deal with things."

The designer's credits include *Blow-Up*, the teleproduction of *The Martian Chronicles*, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (for which he earned an Academy Award nomination), *Revolution*, *Legend*, *For the Boys* and *Rob Roy*.

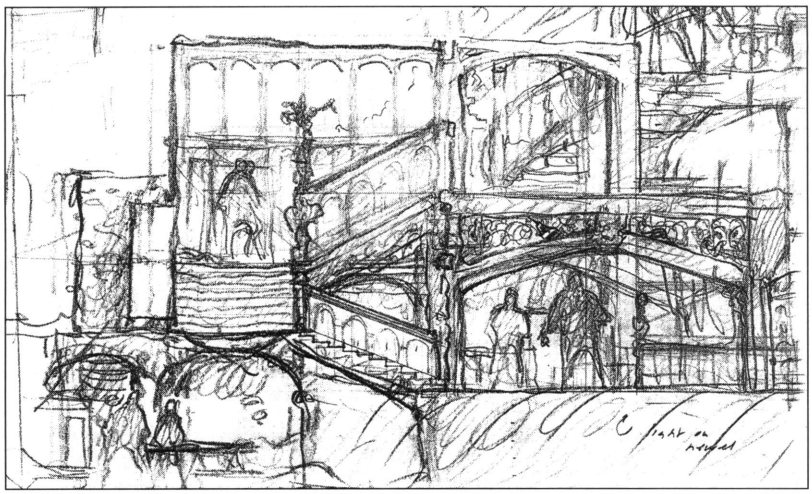
101 Dalmatians provided ample opportunity for Gorton to test his skills. The plot, of course, concerns bent fashion designer Cruella DeVil (Glenn Close) and her plan to make spotted Dalmatian-pelt jackets the rage of the coming season.

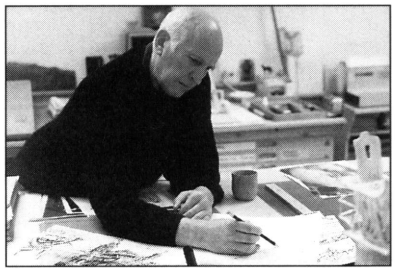
Gorton takes a highly integrated approach to design, drawing prolifically, with a clear sense of structural order, and then proceeding straight into the creation of large-scale models of each set. He views the sets as sculptures, designed to accommodate the action to be shot. This "hands-on" craft approach, he contends, is more efficient than designing on computer. Models enable Gorton to understand any design problems immediately and provide the cinematographer with an instant visualization of shots and even lighting options. "You are providing a discipline for the director of photography because this is what he has to light and he has to make it work," he says. "So I like to be very careful in squaring this with the cinematographer and the director, so they know what they've got [at a very early stage]. That's why I like to make models."

In the case of *Dalmatians*, even the artwork for the story-

Photos by Steve Gorton, courtesy of Disney.

Designed by Assheton Gorton, Cruella DeVil's snow-bound estate exudes malevolence. The manor, built at Shepperton Studios, measured 240' x 120' x 45' and was the production's single largest set.





Gorton's initial sketches of the Elizabethan DeVil manor (exemplified at right), were interpreted as a 1/3-scale model (far, right) in order to allow for precise cost estimates to be made and to offer cinematographer Adrian Biddle, BSC a chance to visualize his lighting before the set was constructed. Gorton (right, in his studio in Wales), sees the "hands-on" model-building process as being far more efficient than designing on computer.

boards themselves were based on Gorton's models. A storyboard artist snapped black-and-white photographs of potential shots within the model, printed them on matte paper and then worked them up with acrylics, chalk and crayons. Due to the complexity of the shoot and the number of setups involved, two storyboard artists and an illustrator were employed for this work.

Miniatures also allow Gorton, and the construction manager, to closely estimate the actual construction cost of the sets. The production designer was able to assess the cost of the DeVil manor house set to within £1,000, entirely from the scale model.

Asked to describe his intial take on the DeVil residence, Gorton relates, "I went for an Elizabethan manor right from the start. The period offers an enormous opportunity for architectural informalities, it can be made spooky and it gives you a chance to incorporate images which can be frightening, oppressive and claustrophobic. It can have all of the attributes of a haunted house, and it has a language which people are used to. It would have been very difficult to incorporate these qualities if we had chosen any other architectural period."

The DeVil manor was the largest and the most important set on *101 Dalmatians*. All of the working areas (and there were no fewer than 30 on this set alone) were closely related, so the action could move smoothly from one space to another. The manor model was built to ¾" scale over a period of just three and a half weeks, and took up a 6' x 10' area in Gorton's extensive studio and workshop in Wales, where he develops his designs.

Upon completion, the minuscule manor was trucked to Shepperton Studios, London, where it was inspected by director Stephen Herek and cinematographer Adrian Biddle, BSC (*Aliens, The Princess Bride, Willow, Thelma & Louise, 1492*). This was the point at which Biddle could begin to visualize how to organize his shoot. The DeVil manor was to be built in a 240' x 120' x 45' stage at Shepperton, complete with courtyard, gatehouse, the remains of a Norman castle keep, and an abbey. (Though the model was expanded later to include a hinterland that would be digitally realized by Industrial Light & Magic, it was then reduced back to its original form and shipped to Orlando, Florida for exhibition at Disneyland.)

The *101 Dalmatians* production schedule was exceptionally tight, with only 16 weeks to prepare the manor set before shooting began. Says Gorton, "It took on a life of its own. We built it in 10 weeks and then spent two weeks dressing it, snowing it up, getting in all the props, aging the set and pre-lighting it."

While designing, Gorton concurrently had to think in terms of two scales because both dogs — mainly puppies — and human actors would be using the set. "With the animals we were often shooting at floor levels, so we had to detail the floors and the floor finishes — the steps, the stairs where the dogs go up, and the handrails — as carefully as everything else. In that type of situation, one piece of insufficient detailing can blow the whole gaff [gimmick]; all of the atmosphere you're trying to create on the rest of the set will just fall like water through a bottomless

bucket, because the camera will always find you out! I like to detail thoroughly in any case, but I was very conscious of the fact that we needed to provide images that worked as well at foot level as they did at eye level."

The steps on the stairs had to be as low as 3" to 4" — as opposed to the normal 6" or more — so the puppies would not fall over them when running up and down the flights. Additionally, all surfaces had to be regularly disinfected, since the puppies were too young to be vaccinated and could easily catch and spread a virus.

To achieve flexibility for the director of photography and the camera crews (a second unit supervised by Harvey Harrison, BSC concentrated primarily on the animals), Gorton built the entire set on a modular grid, using a lightweight steel structure of 6" x 6" universal beam stanchions and 8" x 5" horizontal beams. The walls, floors, stairs and other architectural elements were slotted into this grid, and could be removed at will. While the steel grid was going up at one end of the stage, the set builders were following immediately behind with floors and walls. At one point there were over 70 people working on the set, in 20 different skill teams, including sculptors and scenic artists. There were some 16 people in the art department itself.

When Colin Sorensen, a British lecturer on film, was given a tour of the sets, he compared them to a Medieval cathedral building site. "It is a good analogy," says Gorton, "for this is where you have the central core of what you are building, and all around the periphery are the craft centers feeding into what's being built. The cathedral — the set — holds all of the rituals, the images, mythology, movement and light, and you know that that's the focus of everything.

Adrian Biddle shot *101 Dalmatians* in the 2.35:1 anamorphic format. The widescreen composition had a very direct effect on the set design of the film. Asked to assess the impact, Gorton responds, "With a more square ratio, like 1.85:1, you get

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more chance to see ceilings, and I am a great believer in ceilings because they contain the space you create. Because of the wide ratio, I reduced the ceilings and arches right down to between seven and eight feet, both to accommodate the format and to enhance the sense of claustrophobia I was trying to achieve in Cruella DeVil's manor. The set had to have all sorts of corners and staircases, and I provided as many windows as possible to give the director of photography a chance to use backlighting."

Both camera units were filming constantly during the 26-week shoot. Often, as the first unit vacated their set, the second unit would move in to shoot the scenes with animals. Scenes between the actors and the animals often required the first unit to shoot the actors on one week, and the second unit to shoot reverse angles on the animals a few days later. This tag-team approach required an enormous amount of patience and very close cooperation.

Marked changes of architectural style and design motifs help differentiate the characters and clarify the storyline throughout *101 Dalmatians*. The hero and heroine, Roger and Anita, live in a romantic and cozy mid-Victorian house in London. The animals meet to plot Cruella's downfall in an old, traditionally based, octagonal barn. In total contrast, Cruella's office and fashion workshop are set in a postmodern office structure.

To meet the extensive demands of the script, the barn set was deceptively complex. The octagonal form seems to provide a central meeting place for the animals; in fact, there were bays all around to allow for the practical separation of the different animals involved in these scenes. Gorton observes that "it was like one of those wonderful American primitive artists who painted the magic kingdom, where the lion sits down with the lamb, and similar incongruous groups. We had the same logistical problems, but for real. Although there were no lions, we had to separate dogs, sheep, goats, pigs, and other animals on that set."

A long gallery running off of one side of the barn, and judicious use of different levels, also enabled the designer to provide space for shooting Cruella's downfall, which takes place on his set in one 360-degree shot. During the sequence, the villainess has to be seen arriving by car, entering the barn, being kicked into the mud, falling through a trap door (where a pig drops on her) and being thrown through a window to land in a pigsty. Finally, the puppies escape at the end of the scene — all of which had to be accomplished on a relatively small stage only 35 feet high.

By contrast, the autocratic, *haute couture* world in which Cruella operates was accentuated by setting her office in a striking postmodern office building near the Tower of London, though the actual office interior was again built at Shepperton. Says Gorton, "I was really pleased to find this particular location for Cruella DeVil's fashion empire. It seemed to me that she had to be a very grand, very powerful figure, which would make her comeuppance, her fall at the hands of the animals, all the more dramatic. So I could push my luck with the design when I found the exterior, which looked as though it could contain the exaggerated office set I had in mind. The exterior of the building was very stylish, with steeply pitched Mansard roofs. The forecourt, which we did use as a location, had huge sculptured horses and lots of ironwork within it, and there was a round window on the facade of the building which I was able to use as a link with the set at Shepperton."

The designer fashioned Cruella's office and workshop to be as grandiose and bizarre as possible to "edge the imagery up" in no uncertain terms. Her desk is placed at the top of a wide flight of steps, ensconced by a crouching skeletal structure, which recalls the work of Damien Hurst, an artist who created a sensation in 1995 with his exhibits of dissected animals at the Tate Gallery. The placement also allows for a sobering glimpse of St. Paul's Cathedral through the circular window be-

hind the desk. The 100' x 80' stage for this set was the largest available at Shepperton at the time.

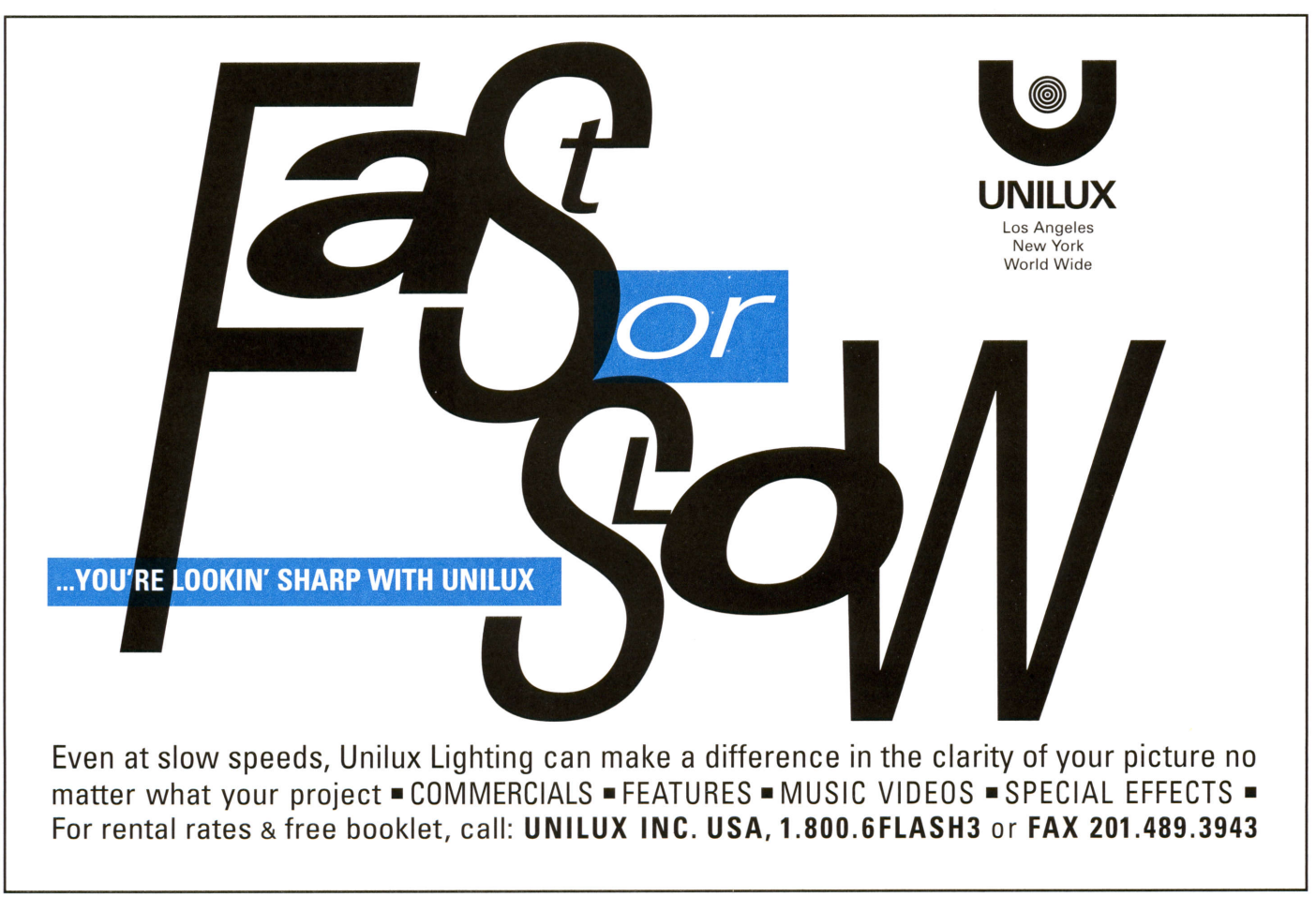
More than 1,000 setups were called for during the *101 Dalmatians* shoot, which required in excess of 115 working areas on the various sets. A third camera crew from ILM went to Shepperton to shoot several bluescreen and motion-control shots; these included the final aerial shot in the film, in which the camera pulls away into the sky from a close-up of Roger and Anita on the grounds of the DeVil manor. This scene required an extensive CGI rendering of the surrounding landscape, since the shot exceeded the boundaries of the set. Biddle uses moody, dark lighting within the manor, while keeping Cruella's office sequences stark to reinforce the thrust of the production design.

As a creative entity, the Walt Disney studio has a powerful style that's had an admittedly strong influence on Gorton's own designs — which is fitting, since the first film he ever saw was *Snow White*. "Disney's work is always very positive," says the production designer. "Before I was even working in films — when I was working in television, or simply watching movies — I always knew that a Disney film would look good. If you went up to Pinewood and saw a set of theirs on the lot, it was always well-textured, well-finished and interesting-looking. And, of course, their stories were always strongly visual ones such as *Kidnapped* and *Treasure Island*."

Not wishing to be influenced by the animated version of *101 Dalmatians*, Gorton refused to view it before he had finished designing the live-action movie. When he finally saw the animated film, he was confronted with a DeVil mansion full of turrets, staircases and all manner of exaggerations he couldn't have constructed in three dimensions. But the designer believes that he has created an equally valid *mise en scene* in a different, if more documentary fashion.

Admits Gorton, "I would have liked to have made [our film] more visual, more stylized, than I was able to do. But if you are shooting on location you have to match the interiors and the exteriors. You have less control over what you can build, because [those sets] have to be within the same convention as the locations you find."

When writer/producer John Hughes first toured the sets with Assheton, he said, "I knew that this was what an animated Disney film should look like. We've taken Walt's artist's interpretation of the real world and reinterpreted it, getting somewhere back between the reality the animated picture was based on and the reality of a live picture. This can't just look like another picture because it's not. It's a Walt Disney picture, and it has a signature and attention to detail, just like all Disney movies do." ◆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Honoring Unique Visions

A diverse display of international filmmaking talent makes Canadian gala an event of global importance.

by David E. Williams

While the Canadian province of Quebec has recently made worldwide headlines with its internal struggles over cultural identity and sovereignty issues, the capital city of Montreal illustrates how diverse and inclusive the region truly is. Highlighting this urbane mood was the 20th annual installment of the Montreal World Film Festival, held from August 22 to September 2.

Opening the festivities was writer/director Ed Burns' romantic comedy *She's the One*, which set a somewhat playful tone for a program of more than 200 films that frequently featured such serious social issues as police brutality, parental abuse, and drug addiction. But diversity was the Fest's strongest attribute, as cinephiles packed the 14 participating theaters in order to see films that would not be readily available at the local multiplex.

Among those films playing to receptive crowds were *Forgotten Silver* (Kiwi co-directors Peter Jackson and Costa Botes' faux documentary about "lost" filmmaker Colin McKenzie); Gerrit van Elst's *Punk Lawyer* (an examination of a solicitor leading a dual life in Amsterdam); Peter Kewitt's *Silent Lies* (an emotionally wrenching American tale of incest); Peter Schamoni's *Niki De Saint Phalle - Who's the Monster, You or Me?* (a delightful and stirring documentary about the influential artist); Luc and Jean-Pierre Dardenne's *The Promise* (a brilliant neorealist drama of responsibility); Alan Taylor's *Palookaville* (in which small-time East Coast criminals elicit laughs); Gille Carle's *Pudding Chômeur* (a Montreal-set absurd comedy); and Jose Joffily's *Who Killed Pixote?* (a drama documenting the life and tragic death of Brazillian child-star Fernando Ramos de Silva, who played the title role in Hector Babenco's 1981 feral-child film *Pixote*.)

Both an open showcase and an official competition, the Festival was overseen by an esteemed jury which included Hungarian director Judit Elek, Spanish actress Assumpta Serna, Italian film critic Guglielmo Biraghi, Quebec-based producer/director Denis Héroux, Cuban director Humberto Solás, and Brooklyn-born *Los Angeles Times* film critic Kenneth Turan. Serving as the chairperson was legendary French actress Jeanne Moreau.

The results of their deliberations and difficult choices were:

Grand Prix of the Americas (Best Film): *Different For Girls* (dir. Richard Spence, Great Britain)
Special Grand Prix of the Jury: *Un Air de Famille* (dir. Cedric Klapisch, France) and *Sleeping Man* (dir. Kohei Oguri, Japan)
Best Director: Olivier Schatzky, *The Pupil* (France)
Best Actress: Laura Dern, *Citizen Ruth* (United States)
Best Actor: Rupert Graves, *Intimate Relations* (Canada/Great Britain)
Best Screenplay: Mario Camus and Felix Bayon, *Adosados* (Spain)
Best Artistic Contribution (direction): Chul-Soo Park, *Farewell, My Darling* (South Korea)

While it was impossible to see all of the films programmed, this reporter managed to sample a variety of offerings. Following are three personal favorites.

No Way Home (United States)
Director: Buddy Giovinazzo
Cinematographer: Claudia Raschke

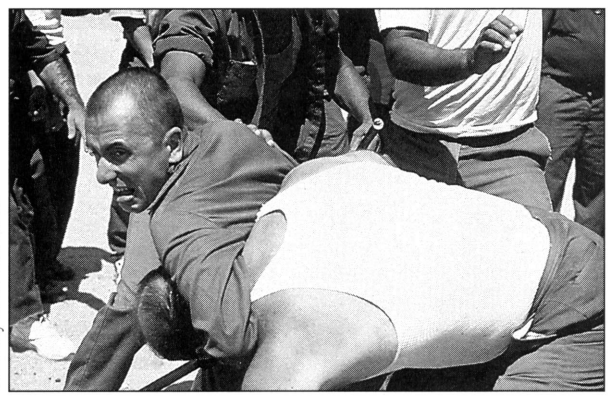
Detailing a fateful bond between brothers, *No Way Home* opens as Joey (Tim Roth), an introspective tough guy, is released from prison and returns to his impoverished childhood haunts to reunite with his older, edgier sibling, Tommy (James Russo). Joey attempts to play it straight while Tommy's offenses rapidly escalate and threaten to suck his brother back into a life of crime. Meanwhile, Tommy's beautiful yet emotionally dead wife, Lorraine (Deborah Unger), rediscovers her own feelings through Joey's struggle.

Writer/director Buddy Giovinazzo, whose ultraviolent film *Combat Shock* (1984) and book *Life is Hot in Cracktown* have earned him an avid cult following, felt that *No Way Home* demanded "a very naturalistic, non-slick look along the lines of *Days of Heaven* [shot by Nestor Almendros, ASC and Haskell Wexler, ASC] — with no colors that weren't directly involved in the scenes or the sets." However, the prospective cinematographers' reels that were initally sent to him didn't satisfy this desire. "If I saw another blue gel, I was going to scream," Giovinazzo recalls. "I wanted to go with the least amount of lighting we needed. If there were shadows, let there be shadows. That's what I'd imagined since I wrote the film five years ago.

"That approach probably wasn't wise, because when you do a film like this you should come out of the gate with a very strong visual style that will attract attention. But that wasn't me, and I wanted a film that was more about the characters than bizarre camerawork."

The work of German-born director of photography Claudia Raschke immediately impressed Giovinazzo "because she was able to tell a dramatic story without having to put an obvious imprint on it. But also, I crewed up the way I cast, by personality and temperament, and I felt Claudia's warmth and sensitivity the second I met her."

In developing their approach, Giovinazzo and Raschke screened *Days of Heaven*, as well as *Five Easy Pieces* (shot by Laszlo Kovacs, ASC) and *Night On Earth* (shot by Frederick Elmes, ASC). They sought out the latter film "particularly to see how car interiors had been done," says the director.



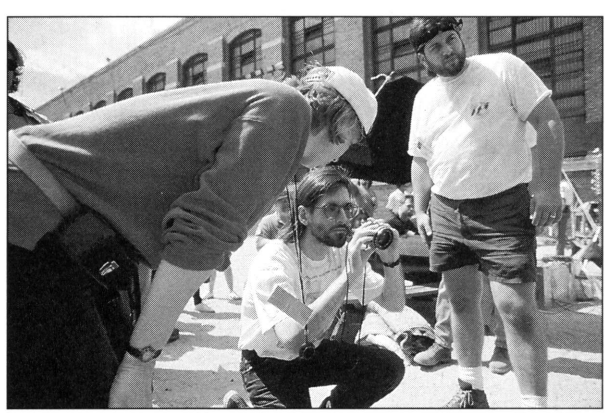
Courtesy of Orenda Films.

The duo were also inspired by another branch of the arts. Says Raschke, "Because of my painting background, I always try to pull examples of painters into my cinematography. We actually settled on an Impressionist style, which is interesting because the theory of Impressionism is about light reflection and refraction and the introduction of color. But there were some Impressionists who primarily used muted colors and brushstrokes to transfer subject into image, and that was something Buddy found very compelling."

The key location in the film is the dilapidated family home, which was a location Giovinazzo found in Staten Island near the neighborhood where he grew up — a fading Manhattan suburb which he describes as "Mayberry on drugs." The filmmakers rented the house for two months, which allowed for elaborate pre-rigging before the shoot began.

On the subject of location shooting, Raschke offers, "You have to deal with reality. 'What time does the sun come up and set and what does that offer in terms of natural light? Where will I encounter continuity problems if I shoot a 12-hour day and the sun moves? What size are the windows and will I have access to light through them?' But since we owned the place, we could drill into the walls and hang things. We also removed some walls, because the house was quite small, but in key rooms like the kitchen, space was still one of our biggest problems."

One solution was to employ lightweight fixtures. Recalls Giovinazzo, "We used a lot of Kino Flos, so we had shots where the camera would be sweeping and someone would be pulling the fixtures out of frame, or we could follow along with someone. I'd never used them before and they were fantastic."



Raschke also utilized overhead lighting grids to allow the camera to heedlessly follow the performances. The cinematographer notes that she heavily preplans her lighting "because if you have been overstimulated by words during a 12-hour workday, your level of exhaustion might hamper your ability to communicate with your crew. So storyboards, lighting and camera plots, as well as diagrams, are a good reminder for people who have to accomplish a series of tasks, especially if I can't be there every step of the way."

Without the time or budget for tests or rehearsals, Giovinazzo relied on Raschke's preparedness to augment his improvisational manner. "That was a perfect compliment to my style," says the filmmaker. "And while I constantly changed the blocking with the actors, which screwed Claudia up, she could adapt very quickly because she was very prepared."

Responds Raschke, "You always throw out part of your plan, because the actors bring something to the film which makes it really alive. But if you have a base plan, you can be quick on your feet, communicate clearly and adjust."

Most problematic was a scene in which Tommy and Joey have a violent confrontation with a loanshark and his enforcers. Confined in the house's cramped kitchen, the fight sequence took several weeks to shoot, with all of the principals bathed in stage blood. "Tim Roth still has nightmares about that kitchen," Giovinazzo says.

Throughout the filming, Raschke used a Movicam Compact, primarily because it allowed her to utilize Zeiss lenses, but also because the camera's size and quiet operation were especially important qualities for this scene's intimate chaos — as was its quick conversion into Steadicam mode.

"With our budget, we couldn't afford to have too many camera bodies floating around," Raschke says. "But again, it was the image sharpness Zeiss offered that I wanted. That gave me the starting point I wanted and I could diffuse from there, depending on the scene."

"Our operator, Peter Abraham, brought a Steadicam with him, so we had it for the entire shoot," Giovinazzo says. "And it really allowed us to incorporate more movement throughout the house as well as let the actors be more improvisational. We basically would set the frame and rehearse, and then I would warn Peter as to where they might go —

Top: *In* No Way Home, *Joey (Tim Roth) fights for his life in the prison yard. Cinematographer Claudia Raschke (bottom photo, in white cap, with kneeling director Buddy Giovinazzo and operator Peter Abraham) relied on Kodak 5245 for bright, sunlit scenes such as this, while 93 and 98 supplied her with plenty of latitude. "93 is really my workhorse stock," she notes, "because I know how far I can push or pull it in a given situation — and still have it hold up."*

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which was much better than being locked into a move on a dolly."

Asked about the film's graphic brutality, Giovinazzo offers, "Violence should be like it is in real life: shocking, disgusting and messy. I can't justify making violence 'slick.' So it's over in seconds, but it's so strong that people will remember it."

Adds Raschke, "Buddy wasn't interested in slowing down anything pertaining to gore. You can easily get into the beauty of blood, and stylizing it. But he was more interested in saying, 'When somthing happens, it's quick and it changes your life forever.' That idea of hindsight was most important to me, because I then needed to photograph the violence in such a way that it had enough impact to make the aftermath haunting. So we had a lot of discussions about the escalation of the mayhem — when it became wild, and when it was over."

Balancing these scenes of violence are quiet interludes of discovery. In one sequence, Joey revisits a former girlfriend who married while he was in prison, resulting in her bitterly confessing feelings of abandonment. Giovinazzo notes, "What Claudia captured in that scene, and in all the interiors, was the shadow detail. In that neighborhood, all of the sunlight comes into the homes through these white lace curtains, which gives everything inside a muted, shadowy look. It's subtle, but she perfectly re-created that texture in the lighting, which made it seem very organic to the set. That scene is as successful as it is because of both the acting and Claudia's willingness to let the performances carry the drama."

Says Raschke, "As a storyteller, I provide subtext and the mood. And in the context of this scene, I wanted a loving lighting — as in a painting by Vermeer. So once had I sense of what Buddy wanted in terms of the actors, camera movements were unnecessary. Camera moves always have an emotional impact on the subject, and a static camera in some ways represents boundries that can't be broken, which fit the characters here. I would never go for a camera move just because it was cool."

301-302 (South Korea)
Director: Chul-Soo Park
Cinematographer: Eun-Gil Lee

While food has served as a common theme in several recent and very popular Asian films [*Eat Drink Man Woman*, *Tampopo*], *301-302* offers a decidedly unsettling variation on the realm of culinary dramas. Song-Hee (Eun-Jin Bang), who lives in apartment 301, is a dedicated lover of food — a blinding affinity which earlier destroyed her marriage. Meanwhile, Yoon-He (Sin-Hye Hwang), who resides in 302, abhors all food — a disgust tied to her history as a victim of sexual abuse. While 301 endeavors to concoct the perfect dish for her bulimic neighbor, their relationship is ultimately defined by her own consuming passions and 302's desire for release. At that point, the police arrive to investigate 302's mysterious disappearance.

Director Chul-Soo Park has long been interested in the roles of women in his country's rapidly changing society. The recipient of the Montreal Festival's Best Artistic Contribution award for his direction of *Farewell, My Darling* (a humorous look at Korean funeral practices), Park has a very fundamental approach to filmmaking. "I don't like the way special effects — such as computer graphics — are used in movies," he begins. "And I have never used them because I believe that films which are made with natural photosensitivity, style and color are honest films. So I am disillusioned with the Hollywood production style."

After his experiences in television production and on feature films (including *The Woman Who Walks On Water*, *Love in Our Times*, and *Adieu, Mon Chéri*), Park saw *301-302* as an opportunity to change his directorial approach and "throw away the storytelling style" imposed on him by previous projects. "Films must escape from standardization, and I have always stressed this point," he opines. "In the case of this film, if I didn't have the audience interested from start to finish, they would shortly feel that it was dry and tedious."

To this end, the Park employed inventive cross-cutting, flashbacks and iconic imagery to build *301-302*'s story subliminally even before it unfolds in the overall narrative structure.

While planning how to shoot the film, Park had to first consider that the story largely takes place in the two eponymous apartments. "The two main characters' personalities were reflected in the photographic style," he says. "301's woman was very active and 302's was very passive. So all of the technical choices — camera angles, movement, lighting and acting — were based on that."

Contending with the subjects of bulimia and anorexia, Park saw these afflictions as the film's "symbol of modern people's solitude," and also sought an overall look of austere modernity for the film.

Since the interiors were shot entirely on stage, Park and director of photography Eun-Gil Lee could custom-build the two characters' respective environments. Describes Park, "301's room was lit mostly with fluorescents and light bounced off the silver floor material. I tried to have the action of [actress] Eun-Jin Bang [reflect that] by being active with her movement. For 302, we used dull-colored flooring material and [set dressings, such as] bedroom furniture, books and her computer. I added to that dry image with sunbeams coming in through the windows."

Their main lighting fixtures were from Arri — primarily 1.2Ks — as Park finds both their tungsten and HMI sources to be more accurately temperature-balanced and consistent in intensity than other makes. However, practical lighting was used extensively, particularly in 301's stainless steel-encased designer kitchen, which featured numerous bare fluorescent tubes and an array of small halogen bulbs hung by wires from the ceiling.

Park contends that he directs primarily by feeling, and he specifically chose to have *301-302* photographed on Agfa film (supplies of which were still available in his country). "I have no rules about which stocks I use," he of-

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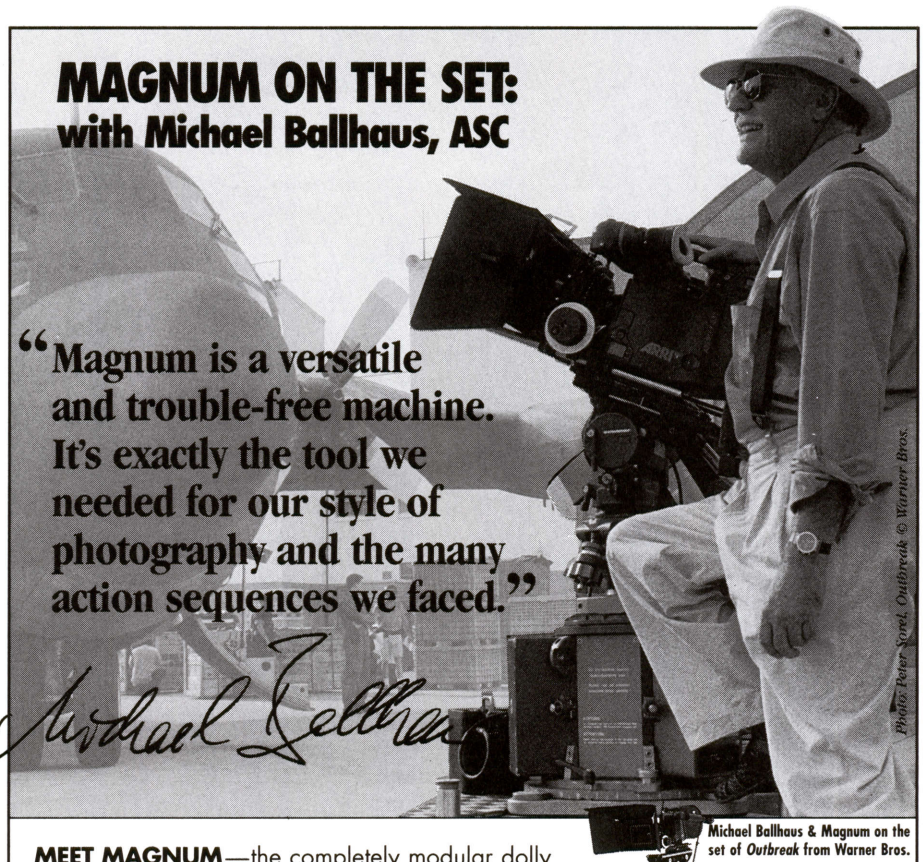
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Photo Peter Sorel, Outbreak © Warner Bros.

Michael Ballhaus & Magnum on the set of *Outbreak* from Warner Bros.

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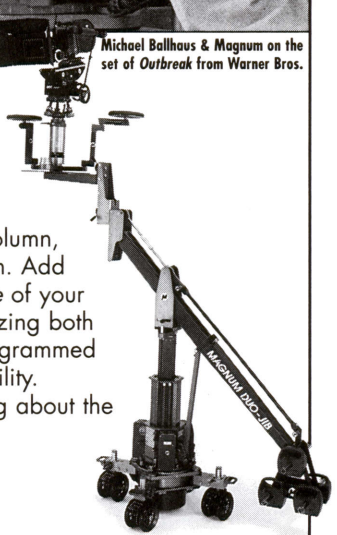

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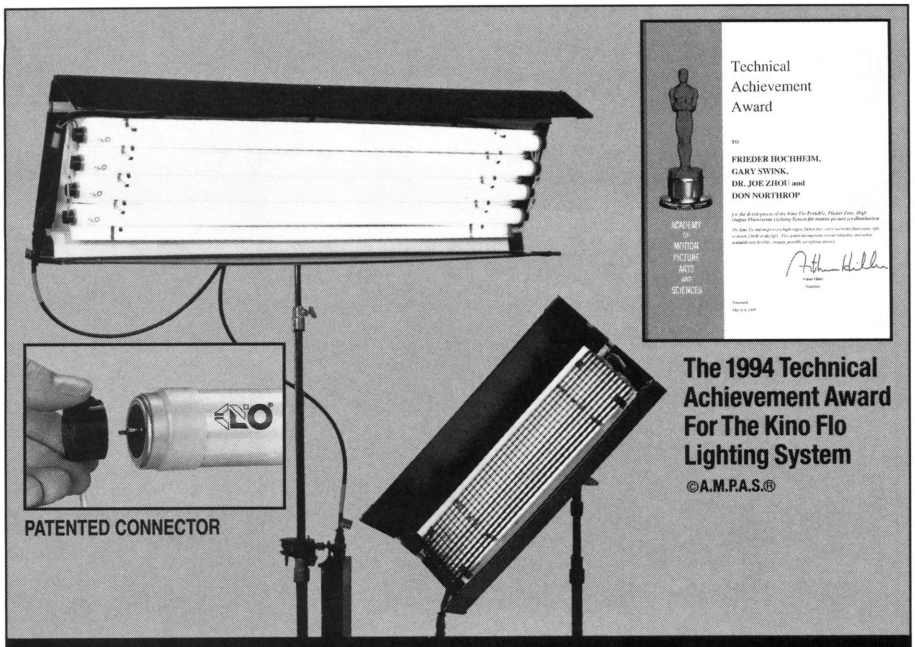

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fers, "but Agfa film has a very strong yellow tone and strong grain particles. Generally, I thought that a tough expression was suitable to express this film to audiences."

While *301-302* is by any measure a professional-quality production, Park reports, "Unfortunately, Korea's film industry is in very poor condition and many participants don't have expert knowledge about film development and postproduction. For this reason, I agree that Korean films are backward in the technical area when compared to those of other nations."

Ecstasy (Spain)
Director: Mariano Barroso
Cinematographer: Flavio Martinez

Ecstasy begins as three seemingly futureless young friends, Rober (Javier Bardem), Ona (Silvia Munt) and Max (Daniel Guzman), hatch a scheme to finance their dream of opening a nightclub: robbing their own families. After the botched hold-up of Ona's father's market, Max is imprisoned. Desperate, Rober and Ona travel to Madrid, where they find Max's father, Daniel (Frederico Lupi), a wealthy stage director who abandoned his son at childbirth. Impersonating Max in order to case the household of his unsuspecting "father," Rober is surprisingly welcomed into an opulent world — forcing him to choose between carrying out the trio's nefarious plan or settling into his newly affluent lifestyle.

Born in Barcelona, co-writer/director Mariano Barroso studied journalism and economics at the University of Madrid before changing his focus and traveling to the United States to attend film classes at the University of Southern California and the American Film Institute. There, the filmmaker befriended cinematographer (and fellow Spaniard) Flavio Martinez, whom he had previously known back home. "After we developed a working relationship at the AFI, I did my first feature, *My Soul Brother*, with Flavio," says Barroso. "And we have been working together ever since."

Starting as a frenetic, pri-

mary color-filled crime film, *Ecstasy* was partially inspired by the work of Martin Scorsese. Says Barroso, "We both love Scorsese's work very much — that sense of energy he uses in his films — but Flavio had also worked with Vittorio Storaro [ASC, AIC], while doing an internship with him on *Dick Tracy*. So those were two important influences."

Barroso and Martinez found Rober's split allegiance between his friends and new home to be *Ecstasy's* stylistic crux, and visually accentuated this dilemma whenever possible during the 42-day shoot. "We tried to create a big contrast between those two worlds," explains the director. "This would help establish the conflict Rober has inside him. So the early portion of the film, in the world he has with his friends, is fairly realistic, while we tried to create a bit of a fairytale in the world he discovers with Max's father. It's a lifestyle Rober has never seen before — [a life] of the theater and old-style luxuries he has never experienced. So we scouted all of the locations to find very opposite places to express that idea, in addition to using costumes and props.

"Flavio tried to reflect this theme with very tough, contrasty photography in the beginning of the film, going softer in the second half. He is very good at suggesting camera angles and preparing shot lists, so we could do very intense work in preproduction. We planned every shot, but what was most important was to link the camerawork and movement to the energy Rober shows in each scene. So we were wild when he was out of control and then slowed it down as he became domesticated by this new life."

Barroso reports that Martinez depended on Kodak's 500 ASA 5298 for most of the filming; while the film's $1.3 million budget allowed for sufficient lighting gear, *Ecstasy* was shot entirely on location in and around Madrid, so making use of existing light when possible was a great help. "Flavio is a very risky director of photography," the director contends. "He doesn't use a lot of lights." ◆

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Detective Scottie Ferguson (James Stewart) develops a fear of heights at a most inopportune moment — hanging from a rain gutter high above a San Francisco alley. The film's opening chase sequence was pieced together with actual location footage, shots done on rooftops in Hollywood, and (as seen here) on a rear projection stage. (Actual 70mm film clip.)

Hitchcock's Acrophobic Vision

Sir Alfred and director of photography Robert Burks, ASC carried suspense to new heights in *Vertigo*.

by George Turner

Witty, rotund and very British, Alfred J. Hitchcock was one of fewer than a handful of movie directors whose name actually meant something to the public. Besides specializing in suspense, a typical Hitchcock picture offered beautiful women, Puckish humor, a prolonged chase and some strategically placed shocks. There were also Hitchcock pictures that were not typical. In the forefront of these is *Vertigo*.

Hitchcock earned his title of "Master of Suspense" in England during the Thirties. His pictures were well liked in the United States even then, when British films in general were poison at the box office. After coming to America in 1939, the director became increasingly more popular. However, long before 1957, when Hitchcock made *Vertigo*, his virtual immunity from criticism had dissipated. A picture in the familiar Hitchcock style brought accusations of producing "the same old stuff," but with any deviation the same cynics advised him that "the shoemaker should stick to his last." Caught in a no-win situation, Hitchcock alternated his traditional thrillers with some daring departures, such as the 1949 costume drama *Under Capricorn*, the "real-time" experiment *Rope*, the all-in-fun *The Trouble With Harry* (1956) and the all-grim and no-fun *The Wrong Man* (1957). That he had lately become a popular TV personality further eroded his position with critics even as it firmed his hold on the public.

Vertigo is definitely off the beaten track for Hitchcock or anyone else, but like most of his pictures it uses one of his many phobias to induce terror. Its basis was a French novel, *D'entre les Morts*, by Pierre Boileau and Thomas Narcejac, whose earlier *Les Diaboliques* had become a hit movie directed by Henri-Georges Clouzot. Preproduction work began in October 1956 at Paramount's Hollywood studios. Playwright Maxwell Anderson, author of *Winterset* and *Key Largo*, had been secured to write the adaptation. Before the end of the year, Anderson, who had changed the title to *Darkling I Listen*, delivered a script too arty, poetic and pretentious to film.

Prior to undergoing surgery for colitis and a hernia in mid-January, Hitchcock, on advice from Paramount's head office, assigned British author Alec

Coppel to write a new screenplay. The result, Hitchcock decided, was also unfilmable. On the advice of Kay Brown, a longtime story editor for David O. Selznick, the director hired Samuel Taylor, a San Francisco native who had written the twice-filmed Broadway success, *Sabrina Fair*.

Hitchcock was brilliant at concocting individual scenes for a picture, but was unable to visualize the necessary connective tissue. He wanted *Vertigo* to take place in San Francisco because of its precipitous streets, unusual architecture and palpable atmosphere of mystery. He envisioned the mysterious leading lady, blonde and dressed in grays and white, as being almost a part of the city's fog. Other Northern California locations and many dramatic highlights were also firmly in his mind.

Suspecting rightly that Hitchcock already knew what he wanted, Taylor wrote the new screenplay from scratch, without consulting either the novel or the other scripts, but working closely with Hitchcock. The two went to the locations to be used, absorbing the atmosphere and working out details. The resulting version, which was called *From Amongst the Dead* during production, uses the basic idea of the novel, but the book's "surprise" ending is exposed about midway through the screenplay in order to favor suspense rather than surprise.

From the outset Hitchcock had decided upon James Stewart and Vera Miles for the leading roles. Stewart, who had thoroughly enjoyed working on three previous Hitchcock pictures — *Rope* (1948), *Rear Window* (1954) and *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1955) — signed on without even asking what the picture was about. He soon had second thoughts. Years later he recalled, "It just wasn't my kind of part. My kind of guy is an easygoing, bumbling sort of fellow like the ones in *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* or *Rear Window*." Still later, after seeing *Vertigo* for the first time in years, Stewart said he only then realized what a great picture it was.

Hitchcock, certain that Miles would soon be one of the industry's top stars, had placed her under an exclusive personal contract. Although driven to distraction by a heavy overdose of directorial attention, she had given him a superb performance in *The Wrong Man*. Her makeup and hairstyle tests for *Vertigo* were begun early in November 1956, while designer Edith Head was planning her costumes. By February 18, 1957 the tests had been completed and Miles' wardrobe was ready.

On March 11 Hitchcock again underwent major surgery, this time for gallbladder removal, and was bedridden for a month. While convalescing, he received a telephone call from Miles, who told him that she was pregnant and therefore could not appear in *Vertigo*. Hitchcock was enraged at what he considered a betrayal. This was the third pregnancy for the actress, who was married to the current movie Tarzan, Gordon Scott. The director never forgave his former protégé for giving up "her chance to become a great star," and 20 years later was still complaining about what he perceived as her ingratitude, griping that her departure from *Vertigo* had cost him "several hundred thousand dollars."

At the insistence of MCA president Lew Wasserman, Hitchcock agreed to bring in Kim Novak, a glamorous and highly paid Columbia star, to replace Miles. Harry Cohn, president of Columbia, agreed to loan Novak in exchange for borrowing Stewart later. The actress and the director were soon at loggerheads. First, she delayed production while she went on a vacation Cohn had promised her. Upon returning, Novak refused to work until she received her share of

Above: ***Ferguson and Madeleine Elster (Kim Novak) pause for a brief moment of romanceamong the redwoods. While Novak proved problematic to Hitchcock,*** **Vertigo** ***boasts perhaps her best performance — as one of the director's most memorable femme fatales.*** **Left:** ***In the shadow of the Golden Gate Bridge, Madeleine readies herself for a dive into the San Francisco Bay. (Actual 70mm film clips.)***

Ferguson is crippled with acrophobia in the mission bell tower. Novel in 1958, the "vertigo" effect, a combination forward zoom and backward dolly, is now a standard cinematic device used to suggest disorientation. This shot incorporated both the in-camera effect and a scale model of the tower interior, shot lying on its side. (Actual 70mm film clip.)

her loan-out fee from Cohn. She also objected to the gray and white costumes Hitchcock insisted upon and had her own preconceived ideas. Yet, despite the director's oft-expressed lack of faith in Novak, she gave him a performance that could hardly have been bettered.

Hitchcock had developed a strong rapport with cinematographer Robert Burks, ASC, who had worked with him on eight films since 1951, and Burks' camera operator, Leonard J. South, ASC, whom the director had known since *The Paradine Case* in 1947. They were making tests for *Vertigo* at the studio and on location as early as October 1956. Hitchcock supervised many of these tests, while others were directed by associate producer Herbert Coleman or assistant director Daniel McCauley. Principal photography commenced officially in September of 1957.

Vertigo was photographed in the VistaVision process, which was developed at Paramount as an alternative to such anamorphic formats as CinemaScope. The original VV cameras, made by Mitchell, exposed an 8-perf horizontal frame on 35mm film which traveled horizontally via an adaptation of the Mitchell intermittent movement. Single-mounted lenses provided focal lengths from 21mm to 152mm. The 2,000-ft. magazines were equipped with drive motors. The frame was 1.485" x 0.991" with an aspect ratio of 1.96:1; ratios from 1.33:1 to 2:1 could be extracted from this. For its own productions, Paramount chose 1.85:1, which conformed to the "golden ratio" preferred by many artists and cinematographers, and allowed plenty of headroom and a much sharper picture than CinemaScope could produce.

VistaVision was first used for *White Christmas*, which Paramount unveiled on a 30' x 55' screen at Radio City Music Hall on April 27, 1954. The VV logo carried the line "Motion Picture High Fidelity." While some key city theaters ran the format horizontally, a printed-down 35mm version was used in smaller theaters. Even in this form there was a noticeable improvement in image clarity. At least 79 VV pictures were made in America and abroad before Paramount retired the process in 1961, though it is still used widely in visual effects work.

Hitchcock and Burks first used VV on *To Catch a Thief* (1955), for which Burks earned an Academy Award, and then on *The Trouble with Harry*, *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (both 1955), *Vertigo* and *North by Northwest* (1959).

Most *Vertigo* exteriors were photographed on locations in San Francisco — at Mission San Juan Bautista (founded in 1797) near San Juan; Cypress Point; Muir Woods National Monument in Marin County; and Big Basin Redwoods State Park, north of Santa Cruz. Much of the photography involved doubles for Stewart and Novak driving their cars or walking with their backs to the camera. These were shot by second units usually directed by Coleman or McCauley and photographed by William N. Williams, ASC, Wallace Kelley, ASC or Irmin Roberts, ASC. The majority of scenes utilized 50mm lenses, with occasional use of 40mm and 35mm.

Most of the many plates to be used on the rear projection stage by Farciot Edouart, ASC and Kelley, and for optical compositing by Paul Lerpae, ASC, were also made by these cinematographers. Photographic effects chief John P. Fulton, ASC directed scenes for his department.

Vertigo's justly famous titles sequence by Saul Bass open the movie. The camera moves in on a woman's face — first to her lips, then to her eyes as they glance left and right, and finally to the pupil of her left eye. From the eye a dozen multicolored spiral patterns emerge slowly, one by one, and float toward the camera and out. This is accompanied by hauntingly lethargic music by Bernard Herrmann, which quickens as we see a chase at dusk across downtown San Francisco rooftops. A suspect leaps across an alley to a steep roof and scrambles to safety. A policeman (Fred Graham) also makes it, but Detective Scottie Ferguson (James Stewart) slips and nearly falls, hanging onto a rain gutter. The policeman, reaching to help, tumbles to his death.

The rooftop chase was shot by Burks on August 26 in downtown San Francisco with Coleman directing. The pair had been working since early morning filming street scenes of Madeleine's Jaguar and Scottie's DeSoto, both driven by doubles. At 4 p.m. they set up at the rooftop location, with Coit Tower and the Golden Gate Bridge in the background, and waited for "magic hour." Between 7:50 and 8:05, as dusk was falling and the city lights were coming on, they made four shots at different light levels. The last

take, undercranked at 20 fps, proved excellent. The chase was augmented with scenes made on rooftops of the Directors Building at Paramount and Security First National Bank at Hollywood and Highland Blvds. The close shots with Stewart and the others were made much later on the process stage by Fulton, a veteran of seven Hitchcock pictures.

Scottie's first seizure of vertigo, occurring just before the policeman falls, is dramatized by his POV: a shot aimed down toward the alley. In mid-shot the distance seems to stretch and the perspective distorts. The vertiginous effect was done in camera, utilizing a zoom lens and combining a forward zoom with a backward dolly move.

The policeman's fall is also seen from Scottie's POV, looking down toward the distant alley as the flailing body becomes smaller and smaller. Graham, a top stuntman and serial heavy, did the fall himself and was photographed from above as he fell some 40 feet onto safety padding. Positive and negative traveling mattes were used to print his body into the scene, creating the effect of the policeman plummeting to the pavement. Following a cut of Scottie staring down in horror, we see his view of people gathering around the crushed body.

Now afflicted with acrophobia, Scottie quits the force. Some time later, Gavin Elster (Tom Helmore), an old college chum, hires him to trail his 26-year-old wife, Madeleine (Kim Novak), an elegant blonde who wanders incessantly. He believes she has been possessed by the spirit of her great-grandmother, Carlotta Valdez, who committed suicide at age 26 in 1857. Scottie observes Madeleine taking flowers to Carlotta's grave at Mission Dolores, watches as she sits and contemplates a portrait of Carlotta in the Palace of the Legion of Honor, and notes that she imitates Carlotta's hairstyle. Registered as Carlotta Valdez, she maintains a room at the rundown McKittrick Hotel, once the Valdez home. At old Fort Point, under the Golden Gate Bridge, she leaps into the bay and is rescued by Scottie. She awakens in his bed as he is drying her clothes.

Scottie and Madeleine begin to wander together, eventually going to Mission San Juan Bautista, 100 miles south of San Francisco. She insists upon going to the top of the bell tower. Following partway, Scottie is overcome with vertigo, hears a scream and sees her falling past a window. At the coroner's inquest he testifies that Madeleine committed suicide. Elster leaves for Europe to try to forget the tragedy. Crushed by guilt, Scotty has a nervous breakdown.

Most of *Vertigo*'s exteriors were photographed on location. Rain, fog and overcast skies plagued the company in San Francisco and other locations, putting the picture increasingly behind schedule. Many day exterior scenes were shot in clear weather by using varying fog filters. Meanwhile, special diffusion filters were devised by Burks to lend Madeleine a magical greenish glow for certain scenes.

The actual San Juan Bautista Mission and its grounds were used in filming the exteriors. The building, which dated from 1812, had lost its tower in a fire, so John Fulton had it restored via matte paintings. One of these, a God's-eye view looking down from above the tower to the sanctuary roof and the body, makes dramatic use of a dizzying perspective.

At the Legion of Honor, Madeleine obsessively contemplates a portrait of her successfully suicidal great-grandmother, Carlotta Valdez. The interior was designed by Henry Bumstead and built at Paramount. (Actual 70mm film clip.)

Another use of the vertigo technique depicts Scottie's POV as he climbs the stairway in the tower. Hitchcock was told that the massive rig necessary to suspend and operate the equipment at the top of the full-size set would cost $50,000. Instead, the set was duplicated as a scale model and the zoom-dolly effect was filmed with the model lying on its side. The total cost was $1,900.

Polly Burson was the stunt artist who doubled Novak's falls on the soundstage tower set. For the scene in which Madeleine apparently jumps from the mission tower, Burson fell 50 feet, turning and twisting, into a big circus net purchased recently from the Ringling Bros. She repeated the fall twice more in order to provide enough footage to use for a much longer fall, but in the final cut she is only shown falling headlong past a window.

The interiors, designed by Henry Bumstead, were built on soundstages at Paramount. The tower stairwell, 70 feet high, was constructed on the huge Stage 5, as were an Elizabeth Arden beauty salon, Scottie's apartment, Elster's office and Ernie's Restaurant. Seven other stages held the coroner's inquest room, the Fairmont ballroom, Midge's apartment, sanitarium interiors, scale model steps, a Ft. Scott "exterior" with water tower, the Argosy Bookstore, Ransohoff's dress salon, and the "exterior" of Scottie's apartment. Process setups were done in Edouart's Transparency Stage.

Scottie's breakdown is symbolized by a nightmare sequence designed by John Ferren: colors change, Madeleine's flowers become garish drawings, and Elster embraces Carlotta Valdez at the inquest, after which she smiles at Scottie and sends him walking down a dark corridor that ends at an open grave

Vertigo Restored to Dizzying Splendor

Universal recently launched a major restoration effort on *Vertigo* under the supervision of industry veterans Robert A. Harris and James C. Katz, proprietors of The Film Preserve Ltd. The same team was instrumental in restoring *Lawrence of Arabia, Napoleon, Spartacus* and *My Fair Lady*. YCM Labs of Burbank, Technicolor, Inc., and Pacific Title also contributed their skills to what may be the most elaborate film restoration to date.

"Our ethic is do it right or don't do it," Harris comments. "We want to feel that Hitchcock would be happy with what we have done." Katz adds that "between *Lawrence* and *My Fair Lady* we had every problem one could possibly have, so we knew what we were getting into — and, for some reason, even that didn't stop us."

An abundance of problems surfaced on *Vertigo*, the new prints of which were made on 70mm. Production photography on the original VistaVision negatives was fully exposed and had faded somewhat, but less than the other elements. The special effects scenes, which were composited using duping stocks that have faded badly, were "basically gone," according to Harris. Also seriously faded were many of the heavily filtered San Francisco "fog" scenes and numerous chunks of dupe negative footage which had been cut in over the years.

Vertigo was originally released with a monaural soundtrack, but an original three-track stereo version exists — and has been retooled into a six-track digital stereo for the new prints. Part of the Bernard Herrmann score had been recorded in stereo in England and mastered on one kind of film, while the rest was done in mono in Vienna on a different stock. Both had become "vinegary" and, as Harris notes, "Even the vinegars are different." Worse yet, some of the recording had been junked in 1967. In spite of these obstacles, the Herrmann score was successfully reconstructed for 70mm presentation in DTS digital stereo — a first for the arena of restoration.

The sound-effects tracks were in such poor condition that it was necessary to redo much of them with new effects, which included extensive foley work. "We tried to use all of the techniques we had without destroying the original aesthetics of the movie," Katz says.

The new edition of *Vertigo* premiered with four screenings at the New York Film Festival on October 5, and is now in release to selected theaters.

— G. T.

in the churchyard.

Hitchcock makes his trademark appearance walking past Elster's shipyard.

After suffering his nervous breakdown, Scottie is nursed back to health by his former fiancee, Midge (Barbara Bel Geddes). Months later he meets Judy Barton, a clerk who closely resembles Madeleine. Obsessed with the idea of re-creating Madeleine, Scottie remakes Judy in her image. Conscience-stricken, Judy relives in her mind how, in the role of Madeleine, she lured Scottie to the church tower to witness the real Madeleine's "suicide." In reality, Elster had broken his wife's neck and dropped her from the tower. Scottie learns the truth when Judy wears one of Madeleine's necklaces. Crazed with rage, he takes her to San Bautista and, overcoming his vertigo, drags her to the belfry. Judy, who has fallen in love with Scottie, admits the truth. Suddenly a dark figure emerges from the stairwell. It is only a nun, but Judy recoils in terror — and falls to her death. In the last scene, Scottie stares down from the tower in desolation. [Note: A coda was filmed, but not used: Scottie and Midge, having drinks in her studio, hear a radio announcement that Gavin Elster has been arrested in Switzerland.]

One remarkable scene shows Scottie and Judy kissing as the walls of her room appear to turn and change into the inside of the stable at the mission, where he had kissed Madeleine. This was achieved by building a circular set using elements of the hotel room and the stable. The camera panned the set completely. This shot was projected behind the actors, who were placed on a turntable and then rotated to follow the movement of the projected image.

Polly Burson also doubled Novak for the tower flashback, in which the body is shown hurtling away from the camera toward the sanctuary roof. This was accomplished via a technique similar to what Hitchcock and Fulton had devised for Norman Lloyd's fall from the Statue of Liberty in *Saboteur* (1942). A steel body frame extending from shoulder blades to lower back was made from a plaster body cast of the actress. This was fitted under her clothes and mounted on a black pipe eight feet long in a room covered in black velvet. She was photographed from above as she fell and the device was manipulated mechanically to turn her various ways, including head down. An optical pullback made the body become smaller as it fell. This was printed by the traveling matte process over a high shot supposedly made from the tower. Burson recalled, ironically enough, that she suffered vertigo through a full day's filming.

Principal photography wrapped in time for the Christmas holidays. For understandable reasons, production had gone a long way past the projected 50-day schedule (including 10 days for preproduction and second unit), and vastly over the initial budget.

An integral part of *Vertigo* is the fine musical score by Bernard Herrmann, with its eerie use of Spanish motifs and romantic-tragic hints of Wagner. The scoring was as troubled as the rest of the production. Herrmann was unable to conduct his music in the U. S. because of a musicians' strike. He took the picture

Ferguson examines the gravesite of Carlotta Valdez after following Madeleine to the cemetery. (Actual 70mm film clips.)

to London, where an English conductor was demanded. Muir Mathieson, England's prestigious movie maestro, began the scoring sessions. Two days later the musicians quit in sympathy with the American union. Mathieson completed scoring in Vienna.

Vertigo was too puzzling and too downbeat to be generally popular at first look, but it has long since gained stature as one of the great romantic fantasies of the screen. Stewart is magnificent in his portrayal of a man on the edge of sanity. Novak offers the performance of her career in the very difficult role of a *femme fatale* who somehow gains one's sympathy. Barbara Bel Geddes is poignantly touching as the kind of intelligent and loving young woman every man in trouble should have at his side. The atmosphere of real places and created settings, crisp editing, inspired music and imaginative cinematography made it possible to bring Hitchcock's hopes and fears to life. ◆

A Paramount *picture; photographed in* VistaVision; *color by* Technicolor; *an* Alfred Hitchcock *production; directed by* Alfred Hitchcock; *associate producer,* Herbert Coleman; *screenplay by* Alec Coppel *and* Samuel Taylor, *based on the novel* D'entre les morts *by* Pierre Boileau *and* Thomas Narcejac; *music by* Bernard Herrmann, *conducted by* Muir Mathieson; *director of photography,* Robert Burks, ASC; *special photographic effects,* John P. Fulton, ASC; *process photography,* Farciot Edouart, ASC *and* Wallace Kelley, ASC; *art directors,* Hal Periera *and* Henry Bumstead; *set decorations,* Sam Comer *and* Frank McKelvey; *Technicolor consultant,* Richard Mueller; *film editor,* George Tomasini; *costumes by* Edith Head; *assistant director,* Daniel McCauley; *sound recording,* Harold Lewis *and* Winston Leverett; *titles by* Saul Bass; *special sequence designed by* John Ferren; *makeup supervisor,* Wally Westmore, NMA; *hairdressing supervisor,* Nellie Manley, CHS; *assistant to producer,* Peggy Robertson; *optical effects,* Paul Lerpae, ASC; *operative cameraman,* Leonard J. South, ASC; *second-unit directors,* Herbert Coleman, John P. Fulton, Daniel McCauley; *second-unit cinematographers,* William N. Williams, ASC, Irmin Roberts, ASC, Loyal Griggs, ASC, Wallace Kelley, ASC; *second-unit operators,* Buddy Weiler, Kyme Meade, Fred Kaiffer; Westrex *recording system. Running time, 120 minutes. Released March 1958 by* Paramount Pictures. *Restored version released 1996 by* Universal Pictures.

John "Scottie" Ferguson, James Stewart; *Madeleine Elster and Judy Barton,* Kim Novak; *Midge,* Barbara Bel Geddes; *Coroner,* Henry Jones; *Gavin Elster,* Tom Helmore; *Doctor,* Raymond Bailey; *Hotel Manager,* Ellen Corby; *Pop Liebl,* Konstantin Shayne; *Neighbor,* Lee Patrick; *Det. Capt. Hanson,* Paul Bryar; *Policeman,* Fred Graham; *stunt double for Novak,* Polly Burson; *Customers at Ernie's,* Bess Flowers, Forbes Murray; *Man outside shipyard,* Alfred Hitchcock.

Information for this article was supplied by Robert Boyle, Henry Bumstead, Robert A. Harris, James C. Katz, Leonard J. South, James Stewart, and the late Farciot Edouart, John P. Fulton, Loyal Griggs and Paul Lerpae.

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High-Stakes Shooting

by Mary Hardesty

Veteran miniature model cinematographer Garry Waller is very aware that on commercial projects where parts of the visual image are manipulated, enhanced and then blended back together, the process will no doubt suffer a snafu of some sort. Says Waller, "Part of my job is to help solve technical problems and make the bad things go away, so I'm constantly reminded of the three principles of concept, design, and execution, which seem to define and predict the outcome of most projects."

According to Waller, the logistics of shooting simple exteriors on location in Las Vegas for a recent New York, New York Hotel and Casino commercial (in which The Statue of Liberty saunters down the strip to the new hotel) were "trying" at best.

"The major casinos don't really care much about the few thousand dollars they can make on a commercial shoot, and we wound up losing locations just minutes before rolling up in the camera car," Waller recalls. "Fortunately, I had my Hollywood contingent, which included gaffer Ken Holt and key grip Kirt Harding, to keep me alert and productive. Also, the Shotmaker [camera car] gave us enough mobility to run and gun and grab as much as we were allowed."

In order to distract viewers' eyes from the majestic Miss Liberty (portrayed by an actress clad in a latex suit) Waller and director Yariv Gaber tried to provide as many cutaways as possible. The cinematographer and his crew were constantly devising new angles and locations for the coverage shots of Vegas that were needed to lend credulity to the spot's premise.

"We wanted to suspend the mystery, as it were," explains Waller. "But, with only six and a half shootable hours in total darkness, every change impeded progress. You could smell daylight coming on each of the four nights we shot in Vegas.

"I tried as much as possible to keep in some sky to enhance the wide-open, flat skyline associated with Las Vegas," adds Waller, who believes that the Vegas location cries out for the use of anamorphic lenses. "It's so flat and spread out, so much *not* like Manhattan."

Along with the usual specific budgetary lock-down plates the crew had to create, Waller and Gaber decided to give the spot more of an edge by using as many moving shots as possible.

Says Waller, "This directly impacts the degree of complexity. Not only are you taking more time on the set to create something, but you are affecting the shot all the way down the line. It's a tough position. You must not only be able to work fast, but also to know when to take the time needed to enable the spot to sail through post."

At the start of this project, Waller commissioned an experiment with the new Kodak Vision 500T color negative film. As the project called for nighttime background plates of Las Vegas, it presented an ideal opportunity to see how well the blacks would hold up with the new stock while still maintaining the richness of Vegas' neon signage.

While Waller found the neon test shot by his assistant Renee Hedstrom to be "truly exceptional" in saturation, richness and detail, and the 500T "impressive," the cameraman realized that for this spot, he did not want to be that deep into the lens. "I wanted to smear some of the colored practical light in the background, so I went with less depth of field."

Once the crew returned from the desert and the edit was assembled, Waller could start the studio portion of the project. Since the actual New York, New York hotel was not completed dur-

ing the production, a miniature was built by Vision Crew Unlimited, a new visual effects studio established by three former staff members of Boss Films.

For several weeks prior to production, Holt and Waller had been deciding on what lighting approach to take on both the miniature hotel and Miss Liberty.

To add scale to the Liberty model, Waller ultimately used a very large, silked source very close to it. "The color, texture and sheen of a costume all share a part in the lighting scheme," notes Waller. "Photographing elements for compositing and digital manipulation is different than shooting a regular scene, and the 93 has always been consistent in this regard. Every gradation falls where you expect it to. Being able to visualize the effects element at this stage, knowing it will be edited on a Flame or Henry, is very reminiscent to me of holding up an old black-and-white negative and figuring out by eye how much exposure is needed to get a nice print."

Photo by Evan Jacobs.

As the New York, New York Hotel had not yet been built, Waller and Vision Crew Unlimited built and photographed a ¼-scale model of the vacation spot to be incorporated with location-shot Las Vegas footage.

Unfortunately, a limited budget led the producers to decide against adding patina or aging the miniature resort in any way. "When the wonderful guys at Vision Crew — Evan, Chris and Doug — are allowed to do what they do best, their aging, painting and detailing adds tremendous scale, not to mention believability," stresses Waller, who used a Panastar for the high-speed miniature work. "The lighting I add then becomes butter, rather than ice. If we had had more time, I would have put a bluescreen behind the miniature to give a better matte when they added the fireworks in post."

There was time, however, to install hundreds of small lights behind the hotel's windows to create a lived-in feeling. "Vision Crew's Doug Miller, who was in charge of the model, had placed photocopied images of furniture in some of the 5,000 windows, and we then glue-gunned white Christmas tree lights behind the Plexiglas windows and used Kino Flos to create a moonlit night feel."

With more than a dozen miniature projects under his belt, including *Batman Returns,* Waller knew how important it was to do a test and get the agency to sign off on it before he started going for takes. "Once we got back in the edit bay and everyone saw the footage, the client and the agency calmed down," he reports. "The only thing we changed when we went to shoot was a camera move, which meant that I had to throw out the smoke we had planned to use. I find smoke to be very helpful in creating a realistic depth of field and adding atmosphere around a miniature."

During the four days of shooting on Hollywood National Stages, Waller and gaffer Holt would run back and forth between the Liberty set and the miniature hotel, which was built at ¼"=1" scale. The cameraman was somewhat rushed on his model work, having spent about three hours shooting the hotel during each of the first three days, and about five hours shooting it on the final day. Noting the difference between theatrical and commercial schedules, he says, "On a feature I would have about three days to light and shoot a similarly sized model." ◆

Spot: NYNY Hotel/Casino
Cinematographer: Garry Waller
Director: Yariv Gaber
Producer: Gary Rose
Production Co: Moxie Picures
Special Effects: Vision Crew Unlimited

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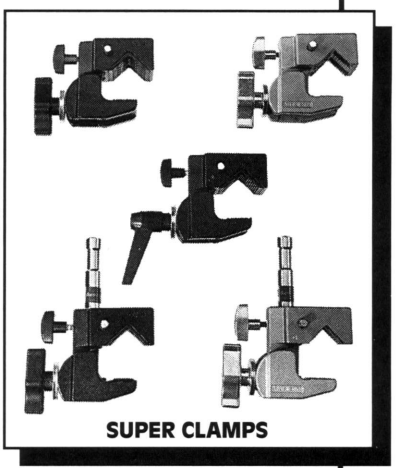

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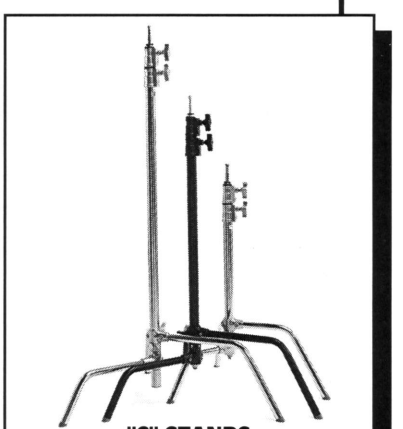

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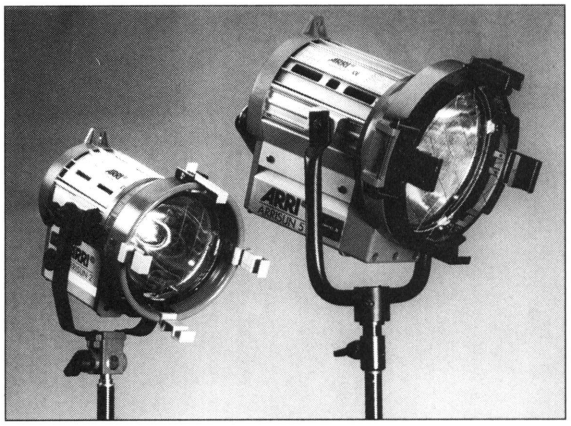
New Products

compiled by Andrew O. Thompson



New Arrisuns

Arriflex presents their new Arrisun 2 (200W) and Arrisun 5 (575W), small, portable HMIs built using the same concept as their larger counterparts, the Arrisun 12, 40/25 and 60. They are fully featured and can be powered by an AC or DC electronic ballast. Both offer the same five-lens set and built-in focus control for a seamless range from spot to super-wide angles. Each light was designed with a specially developed computer program to simulate the interdependence of lamp, lens and reflector — a feature that helps to calculate maximum performance.

Arriflex, (818) 841-7070, Fax (818) 848-4028.

MSR Standard and Short-Arc Lamps

Philips introduces its new 6000W and 1800W lamps. The MSR 6000 HR has been designed to operate with the same ballast and igniter as the double-ended HMI and MSI 6000. In open face systems the light output of the single-ended MSR 6000 HR is comparable to that of a double-ended HMI or MSI 18,000; the illuminance is as high as that of an 18K lamp, while the actual power consumption is two-thirds lower at 6K. In terms of size, the 1800 is interchangeable with the MSR 2500 HR. It has a luminous flux of 150,000 lumens. The lamp current of the 1800 on 110-volt networks is less than 20A, making it easy to operate in these networks. The existing 2500W ballasts need to be adapted, however. Both lamps have hot-restrike capability.

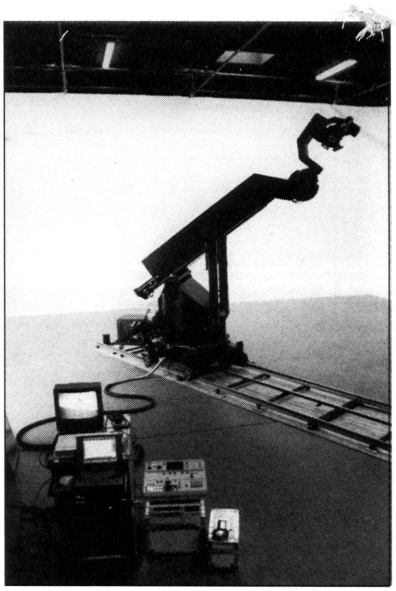
Philips ' metal-halide Short-Arc lamps are extremely compact and have a high-permissible pinch temperature, which under normal circumstances can be as high as 450°C. This allows manufacturers of stage luminaires to reduce the dimensions of lamp housings even further; they can therefore create even more compact, lightweight and mobile fixtures. With no outer bulb and a very short arc, these lamps are ideal for use in optical systems with a short focal distance, and in high-performance optical systems which produce a narrow beam. The naked lead support wire to one of the electrodes must be taken into consideration when designing the lamp housings. The high luminance of the almost point source permits high light levels. The effects should be taken into account when using color-filter foils.

The new lamps are initially available in 200W and 400W versions with 700W and 1,200W lamps on the horizon. All lamps are characterized by a high luminance. Their color temperature is 5400°K, giving excellent daylight matching, while their color-rendering index, Ra, is > 70. These single-ended lamps have a GY lamp base and asymmetrical pins in order to obtain the high-ignition pulses always on the same lamp-base pin with the insulated electrode lead. The arcs can be operated in any position and have a lifetime of between 200 or 500 hours, depending on usage.

Philips Lighting, 31-40-27-57234, Fax 31-40-27-57288.

Motion-Control System

Camera Control Inc. now offers the Milo, a fully portable motion-control system for live action shooting which can be set up for filming in under 45 minutes. The Milo's unusual shape is a result of computer analysis to identify a structure



that would allow for quick changes of direction at high speeds with a minimum of vibration. As well as the usual axes of track, jib, pan, tilt and roll, it features a unique extending double arm system which allows the rig to achieve tricky moves at high speeds. The camera will reach 13 ½ feet from ground level in five seconds and can travel at over 6 ½ feet per second. The rig runs on a one-meter-wide crane track or on precision v-block recirculating ball bearings.

Camera Control Inc., (310) 581-8343, Fax (310) 581-8340.

Movie Star System

AFM Lighting has developed the Movie Star System for safe, versatile crane-mounted lighting. The heart of the system is an automated Fresnel head, available with a choice of light sources — 12 or 18K HMI and 20K incandescent. The head has remote-controlled pan, tilt, spot/flood capabilities. The crane can accommodate one, two or three heads with a maximum mast height of 55mm. Alternatively, the heads can be mounted directly onto pre-existing structures such as trusses and scaffold tubing. The heads can then be positioned and focused via remote control. Various control options

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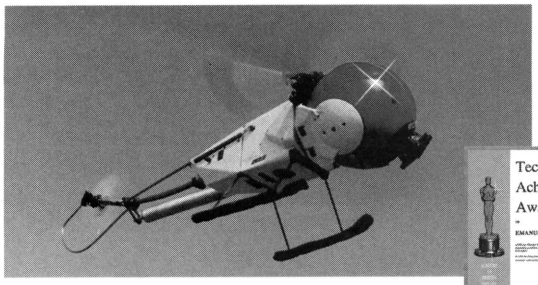

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include the very simple, custom AFM hand-held pendant remote. The system can also be run from any standard lighting controller, enabling easy integration of the units into general moving light scenes.

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Camera Stabilizing System

G.P.I.'s new PRO Gyro System was designed specifically for situations that require extra stabilization, such as shooting in high winds, shooting with a vehicle mount, or whenever there is a desire for greater inertia around the pan and tilt axes. The additional inertia provided by the gyros creates a more stable platform that opens up possibilities in camera movement. Depending upon operator ability and preference, one can uses lenses of up to 400mm. Use of gyros is governed by a certain rate of pan and tilt. Exceeding a certain pan rate will cause the gyros to precess.

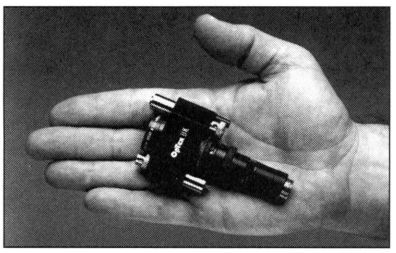
By substituting the lower section of the PRO sled with the gyro mount, there is no need to reconfigure the whole system or have an entirely separate piece of equipment; quick and easy attachment to the PRO sled is made via bayonet mount. The gyros can be configured in a variety of ways with the help of clamps and mountings designed specifically to allow for maximum flexibility.

Two KS6 gyros replace the PRO battery module and weigh approximately the same as the battery pack with three PRO batteries. The sled and gyros are powered by three PRO batteries and an inverter, all housed in a backpack which attaches to the vest. The Gyro power inverter provides 120v AC, 400-cycle output and features 12/24-volt input and 12/24-volt camera capability identical to the PRO battery module.

George Paddock Inc. (800) 390-3991, Fax (818) 982-8976.

Mini Zoom Lens

The OpTex OT618 miniature zoom lens is designed to fit directly onto the Sony XC-999 or Pulnix TMC-X and, via a lens adapter, the Toshiba IK-M48PK camera. The lens has a 3:1 zoom ratio in the range of 6-18mm with a maximum aperture of f2.8. It is available in two versions: manual or with motorized zoom, focus and iris control. For full remote operation of the motorized version,



OpTex offers its own pan-and-tilt system and environmental housing, which has a variable zoom speed with a minimum end-to-end time of 2.5 seconds.

OpTex, 44(0)181-441-2199, Fax 44 (0) 181-449-3646.

4.5mm Double Asphere Attachment

Century Precision Optics introduces the 4.5mm double asphere attachment for its 6mm T1.9 lens. This slip-on attachment expands the 6mm prime's already wide field of view from 92.4 to 107.9 degrees (measured horizontally). A 6mm lens equipped with the 4.5mm double asphere attachment effectively gives the user two lenses in one: a wide 6mm T1.9 or an even wider 4.5mm T1.9.

Like the 6mm prime, the 4.5mm double asphere attachment features advanced aspheric optics. Its single element features two aspheric surfaces for low distortion — less than eight percent — and lighter weight. The front of the attachment forms a wide-angle lens shade and includes a slot for a Panavision-size filter in a holder.

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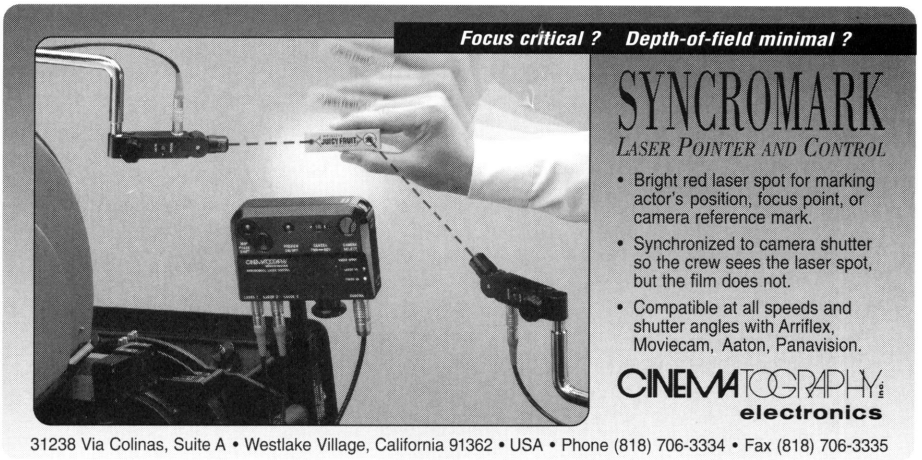
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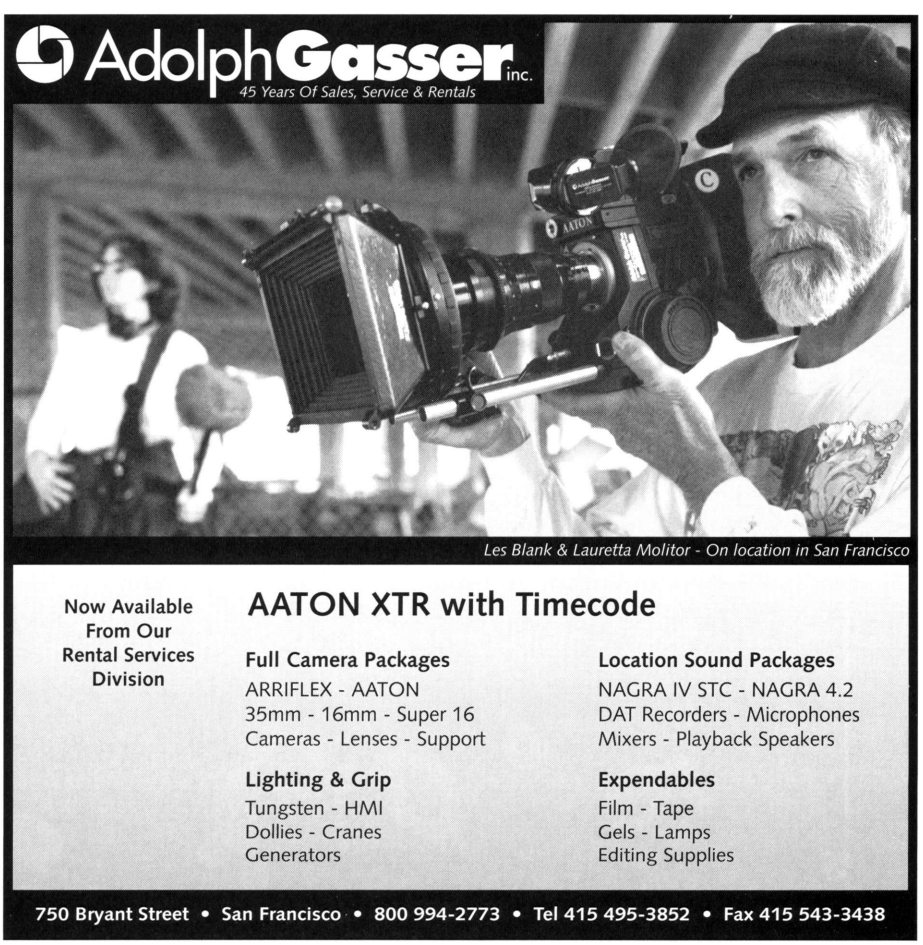
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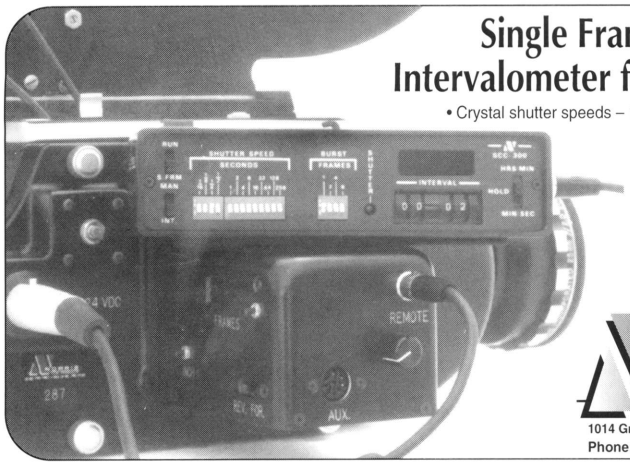

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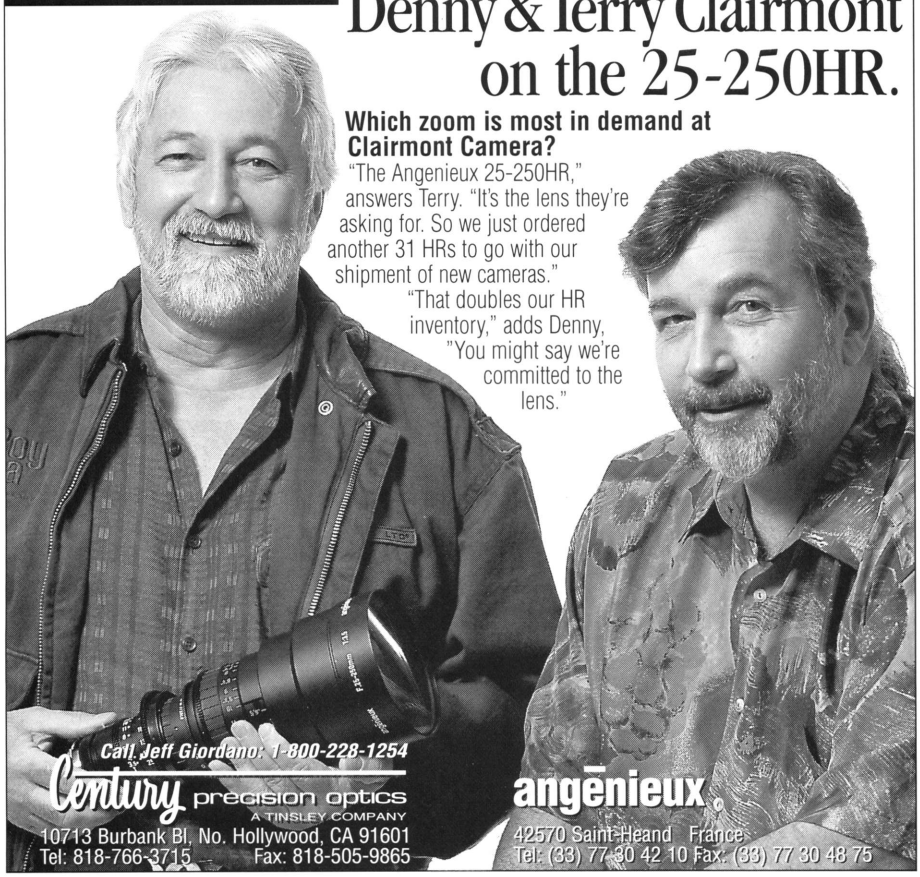

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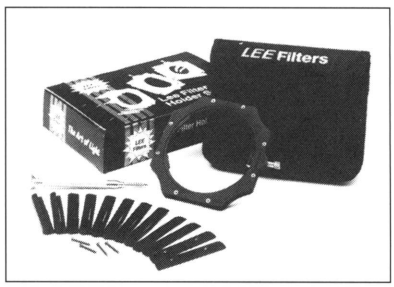

Camera Filter Holder

Lee Filters announces its recently patented structure for holding optical accessory elements for a camera lens. This filter holder system allows virtually any lens to use a standard 100mm filter width through the use of adapter rings. Polyester, resin or glass camera filters are accommodated easily through the use of filter guides of various thicknesses; they can be combined in literally unlimited arrangements.

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Flying-Eye Apparatus

Cine Radio Model introduces the Zero Gravity Flying Eye Project. The Zero Gravity Eye's design is based around a miniature helium-filled airship (blimp) which can fly and hover anywhere (interiors/exteriors) in complete safety. It can accomplish extremely high points of views over crowds, and at the same time safely travel or hover inches from someone's face. The unit can carry a state-of-the-art, custom-built (by Cine Radio Model) Kevlar and carbon fiber 35mm motion picture camera (body weight of 2.4 pounds) with reflex video assist, or a professional broadcast quality video camera for live television network broadcasts.

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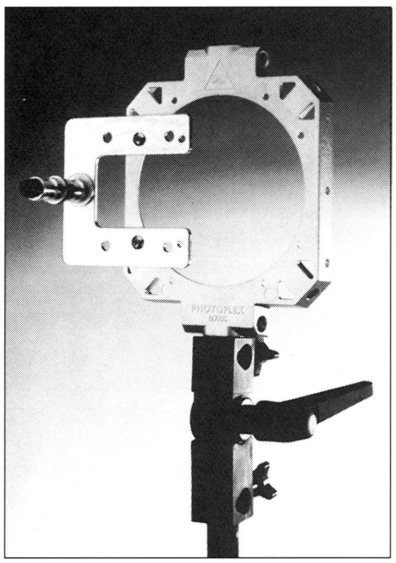
and helmet display that allows him or her to view the airship and the video frame simultaneously. The cameraperson operates from a joystick control center with video monitors and 8mm record and playback capability. Three-way communication between the director, pilot, and camera operator assures perfect "sync" every flight.

Cine Radio Model, (310) 827-2966, Fax (310) 827-3822.



Video Light Connectors

Photoflex introduces the VC-658 and VC-500, two additions to the Connector FV series of video light connectors. Both are built for use with constant light sources and are made to fit Photoflex's Silverdome softbox. The connectors are constructed solely of metal and will not melt or break. In keeping with a modular philosophy, each connector fits a variety of different light units, including Arri, ColorTran, LTM, Photon Beard, Calumet, Altman and K5600. Each connector is compatible with the standard accessory holder design. The VC-658 has a 6 5/8" diameter and the VC-500 a diameter of five inches.

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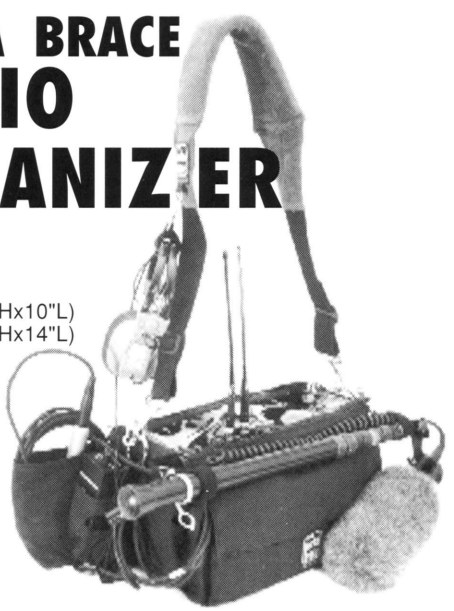

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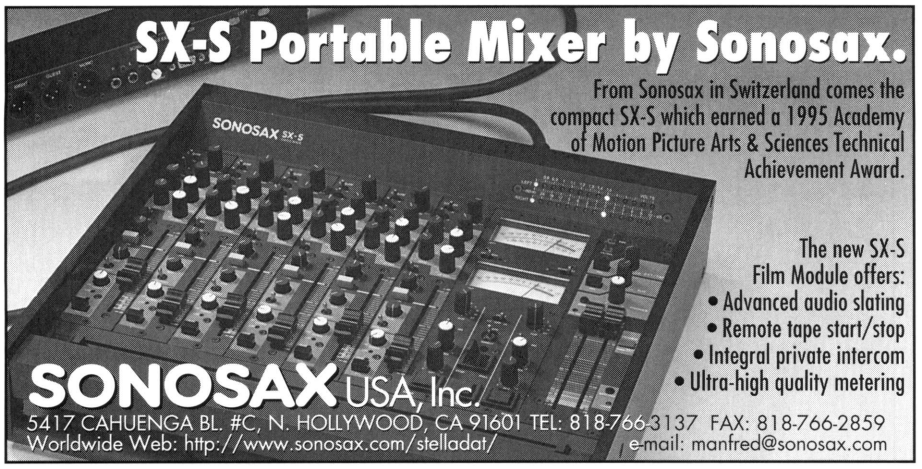
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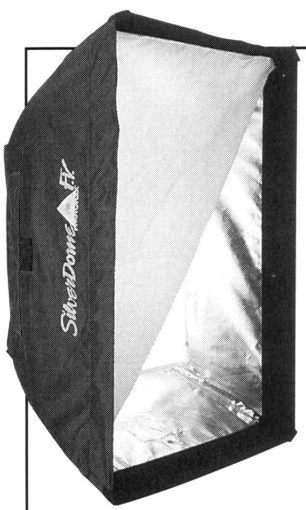

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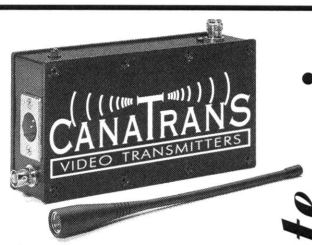

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Hope and Despair in Cuba

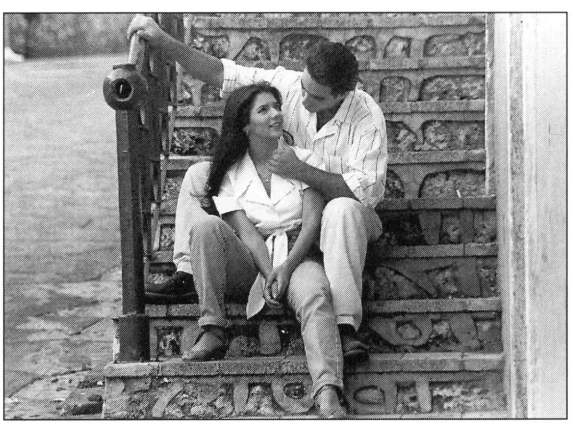
by Brooke Comer

Director León Ichaso (*Crossover Dreams, Sugar Hill*) left his native Cuba in 1963 at age of 14 when the Communist revolution was in its infancy, but his ongoing outrage at the repression and indignities still suffered by Cubans inspired his latest film, *Bitter Sugar*.

"I was fed up with the way intelligent people are ignoring the gravity of the situation in Cuba," he says. "It was my responsibility as a director to make this film. I was very impressed when I heard Steven Spielberg say that *Schindler's List* had to be made so that people would not forget. In my case, this film had to be made so people would acknowledge something that is still happening. The film industry has become blinded to the ongoing Cuban holocaust, which puzzles and surprises me."

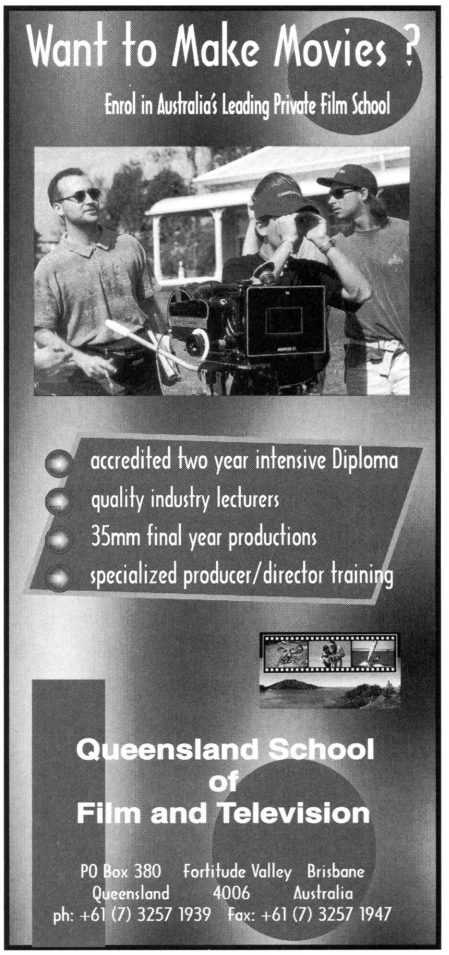
The plot of *Bitter Sugar*, co-written by Ichaso and Orestes Matacena, was inspired by actual people and events. Gustavo, an example of the "new man" of Cuba, is an idealistic honor student with a prestigious scholarship to Prague in his future. Gustavo's father, however, makes more money playing the piano at a tourist hotel than he does in his psychiatric practice. Meanwhile, the police are constantly closing down Gustavo's brother Bobby's heavy metal concerts and arresting him and his friends for their protest music. Gustavo's scholarship gets postponed, but the student is unfazed, as he's just met Yolanda, a beautiful dancer whose politics differ drastically from his own. Against the backdrop of a beautiful, decaying Havana, Gustavo and Yolanda fall in love.

Gustavo eventually realizes the hypocrisy of the system he once endorsed, but by then it is too late: Bobby joins other disillusioned youth and injects himself with AIDS-infected blood, Yolanda becomes a prostitute, and his father is fired from his lucrative gig as a pianist.



Gustavo falls in love with Yolanda amid the decaying Cuban capital of Havana. For political reasons,* Bitter Sugar's *exteriors were filmed in the neighboring country of Santo Domingo.

With *Bitter Sugar*, Ichaso set out to expose the scandalous statistics that the Cuban government would rather conceal — including the hordes of students training for jobs that don't exist and the 30,000 teenage prostitutes turning tricks just to make ends meet. As the film's vehemently anti-Castro message precluded the filmmaker from actually shooting the picture in Havana, he opted for the neighboring nation of Santo Domingo. There, he filmed interiors and exteriors that could be intercut with second-unit Havana footage, which was shot in Cuba by a crew that claimed to be filming a documentary about Caribbean architecture. Under this guise, the crew — and especially their American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dollars — were welcomed into the country.

For safety's sake, Ichaso did not accompany his crew to Cuba, but he did send them a specific shot list: the Malecon sea wall, re-created to scale in Santo Domingo, but also filmed in Cuba using doubles; a cemetery; a hospital; and moving shots of pedestrians on the streets, to show the expressions of a people who have nowhere to go and nothing to do. Says Ichaso, "These are people who wait for something to happen, the way a prison population does." The Cuba crew also brought back props from Havana, including rum, beer, shirts, posters and diplomas. The director notes, "With the right kind of money, you can buy anything in Cuba. Everything is for sale. Families sell photos from their albums on the sidewalk. It's a giant flea market."

To capture crucial landmarks such as the Havana skyline, cinematographer Claudio Chea (*Crossover Dreams*) made use of an army-surplus camera that was more than 50 years old. This camera, and additional equipment, came from a rental company allegedly run by Cuban leader Fidel Castro's brother, Raoul. "Private enterprise is owned by politicians," Ichaso explains. "Cuba is a capitalist regime under the guise of Communism — it's like a 'drag queen government.'"

During preproduction, Chea and Ichaso decided to give the film a gritty, loose look reminiscent of Gillo Pontecorvo's *The Battle of Algiers*. The filmmakers employed Kodak's 5222 Double-X stock and an Arriflex BL, which proved advantageous on location work due to its flexibility and portability. The director himself also shot several scenes with a Hi-8 camera, including those in which Bobby shoots up with HIV-infected blood, a young boy graduates from the Lenin School, and lovers frolic on the beach.

How can anyone do justice to a film about a "drag queen government" by shooting with monochrome stock? Ichaso explains, "Black-and-white portrays the anguish I wanted to express and gives the film some depth. And besides, Havana is a city without color. It is completely monochromatic. There is no paint. And it would have been impossible to decolorize Santo Domingo."

Though much of *Bitter Sugar* takes place outside, Ichaso had several HMIs for backup in case the Caribbean sun betrayed the filmmakers. Remarking on Santo Domingo's unpredictable weather, he says, "You can be standing on one side of the street in the sun and across the street it's raining." For a more dramatic effect, and to mimic the characteristic ambiance of the Cuban capitol, Chea opted for side lighting. Says Ichaso, "Havana is in shadows most of the time. There are blackouts five or six times a day."

To add to this authentic feel, the director hired extras who had recently left Cuba, and their passion and memories lent to the onscreen pathos. Describing the performer who portrays the government official who grills Bobby after his arrest, Ichaso says, "He'd left Cuba just two weeks before and had never been in front of a camera in his life, yet he was a natural actor, because when you live in Cuba you spend your whole life acting. People there develop a level of hypocrisy to get through the basics of life, a skill that can compare to anything learned in an acting class."

In a final scene that also echoes reality, characters are seen leaving Cuba in a flimsy raft. "All of the extras on that raft had recently left Cuba just that way," says Ichaso. "Everyone started breaking down. Rene Lavan, who plays Gustavo, had watched his young son die in his mother's arms on such a raft. Even the Dominican grips and electricians, who barely knew what the whole thing was about, were in tears. I told Claudio to just shoot. While he pretended to set up shots, the cameras rolled. We got footage that was more real than acted."

Bitter Sugar was completed in New York at DuArt and Sound One, where Ichaso salutes Irwin Young and Bill Nisselson for "thinking that this movie mattered." The filmmaker spends more time in California now, but he still has a great fondness for New York, where "there's a respect for filmmaking that you don't find in Los Angeles." While Ichaso was doing post work on *Bitter Sugar* with co-producer Lisa Rhoden, the blizzard of 1996 shut down the city and the temperatures plunged. But the director didn't mind. "In many ways," he observes, "it's much colder in Los Angeles." ◆

Books in Review

by George Turner

W. S. Van Dyke's Journal: White Shadows in the South Seas (1927-28)
Edited and annotated
by Rudy Behlmer
Scarecrow Press,
152 pps., cloth. $34.50

Most of this small book's fascinating information about director Woody "One Take" Van Dyke comes from primary sources. Hence, it's virtually immune to the taints of innuendo, mnemonic error and deliberate revision that invalidate too many attempts to record history. A cache of recently discovered letters written by Van Dyke from Tahiti during production of *White Shadows in the South Seas* in 1927-28 produced much of the commentary. This correspondence was sent to his inamorata, Josephine Chippo, a beautiful, MGM script clerk who worked on several Van Dyke pictures. Found in the bottom of an old trunk, they were donated in 1992 to the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. An unfinished autobiographical manuscript by Van Dyke was also consulted, along with existing studio story conference notes and comments made by performers and production personnel associated with him.

White Shadows was begun by the great documentarian Robert Flaherty, with Van Dyke as co-director. Flaherty was soon cashiered and Van Dyke finished the job on his own, growling all the way. His letters reflect his unhappiness with Flaherty, the incessant rain, nosy studio supervisors, actresses Raquel Torres and Rena Bush, bouts with the flu, MGM's refusal to send Chippo to Tahiti, and practically everything else about the expedition. Though he clashed occasionally with cinematographer Clyde DeVinna, ASC, who had romanced Chippo during a previous Van Dyke expedition, the director praised his work highly (DeVinna received an Academy Award for the picture). Strangely, after all of the bickering, Van Dyke later took most of the same crew with him — including DeVinna and Chippo — on his return to the South Seas for *The Pagan* and on his big African expedition for *Trader Horn*. Whether the romantic triangle was ever resolved and what became of Chippo remain nagging mysteries.

In addition to providing a fascinating look behind the scenes of the expedition and clues to the thinking of a hard-driving director, there are also revealing notes about both *Tarzan, the Ape Man* and *The Thin Man*.

It Came from Weaver Five
by Tom Weaver
McFarland & Co.,
386 pps., cloth, $38.50

This is Weaver's fifth collection of interviews with the men and women who were involved in the making of horror, science-fiction and serial productions from the Thirties to the Sixties — thus the rather cryptic title. Weaver is a specialist in the history of horror, science-fiction and fantasy cinema, but the filmmakers he interviews are of interest to any moviegoer. Especially delightful are Gloria Stuart, the radiant star of James Whale's *The Old Dark House* (1932) and *The Invisible Man* (1933); Anne Gwynne, Universal's lovely ingenue of the Forties; composer Les Baxter; Australian actor-director Michael Pate; director Robert Wise; and Eagle-Lion producer Aubrey Schenck.

It's fascinating when veteran stuntman Gil Perkins remarks that in 50 years he participated in about 1,500 features and 2,000 TV episodes, and mentions doubling for both the 1931 and the 1941 versions of Mr. Hyde, as otherwise respectively played by Fredric March and Spencer Tracy.

Interviews often are spoiled by journalists who ask useless questions, miss rich opportunities or try to upstage the interviewee. No such problems arise here. The author has obviously done his homework beforehand, is careful to ask intelligent questions, and doesn't clutter things up with nonsensical chatter.

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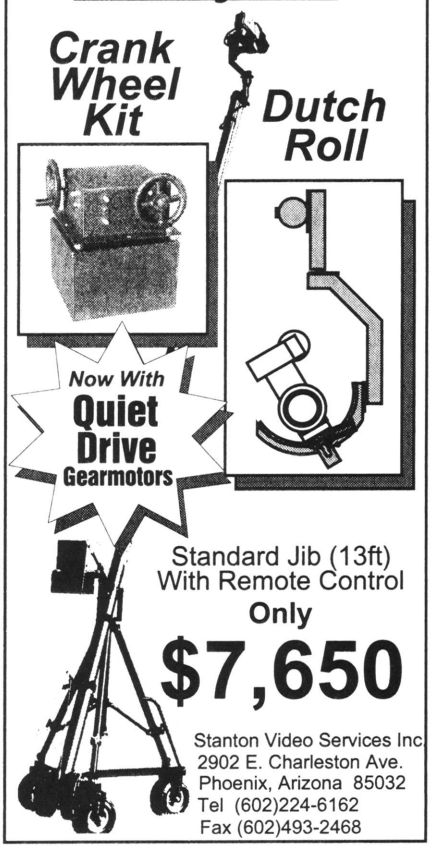

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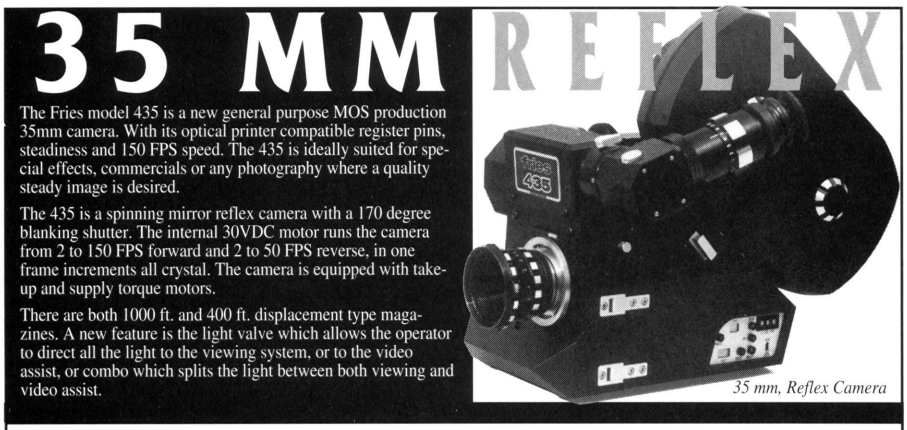
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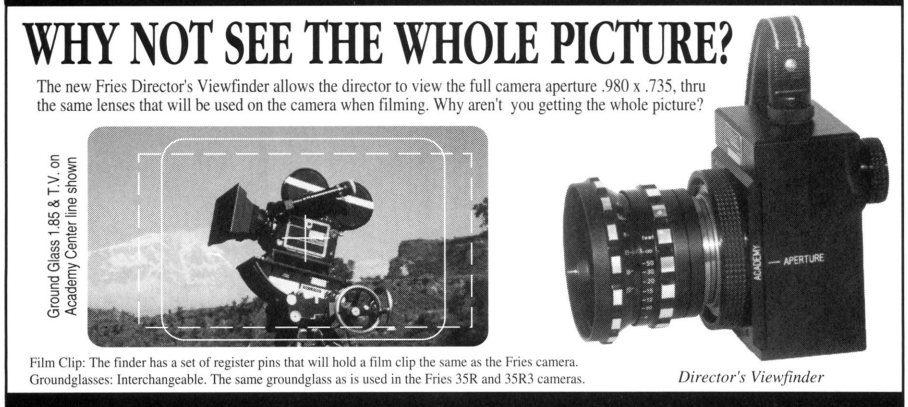
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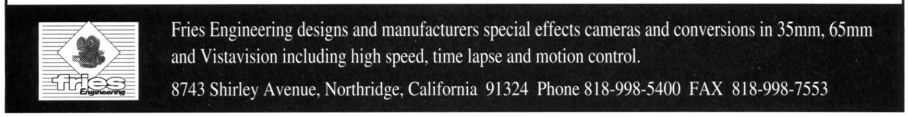
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Reel Justice:
The Courtroom
Goes to the Movies
by Paul Bergman
and Michael Asimow
Andrews and McMeel,
357 pps., paperback, $14.95

In the fresh and different *Reel Justice*, two UCLA law professors take a penetrating gander at about 70 different movies that spotlight courtroom sequences and rate each in terms of authenticity, quality and dramatic worth. The rating system is as follows: four gavels = *a classic,* three = *good,* two = *just okay,* and one = *ask for a new trial.* The movies subjected to scrutiny and range from courtroom blockbusters (*Inherit the Wind, 12 Angry Men, Fury, Adam's Rib*) to lesser-known legislative titles (e.g. *Prisoners of the Sun, Let Him Have It).* Credits, a synopsis and a detailed report on the courtroom action are given in each case.

Not surprisingly, many of the films based on real court trials rate four gavels: *Judgment at Nuremberg, A Man for all Seasons, Breaker Morant,* and *The Life of Emile Zola,* for example. Several comical pictures, including *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town, Bananas, Miracle on 34th Street* and *Adam's Rib,* attain three-gavel status, while the recent *My Cousin Vinny* earns four. Most of the "heroic" lawyers — say, Al Pacino in ... *And Justice For All* and Michael Douglas in *The Star Chamber* — fare poorly due to dubious courtroom melodramatics. However, *To Kill a Mockingbird,* with Gregory Peck at the bar, and a few others nab top ratings. Trick endings mostly get short shrift, but *Witness for the Prosecution* comes out tops. Of the three Hitchcock films that are included, only one rates a good and two are "just okay," but who ever looks for logic in a Hitchcock opus?

The legal eagles deal more gently with these movies than one might expect, putting more titles in the two top ratings than in the bottom two. If, like your humble reviewer, you've ever wondered about the validity of movie trial procedures, *Reel Justice* is informative as well as amusing, and it's all written in enjoyable English instead of legalese. ◆

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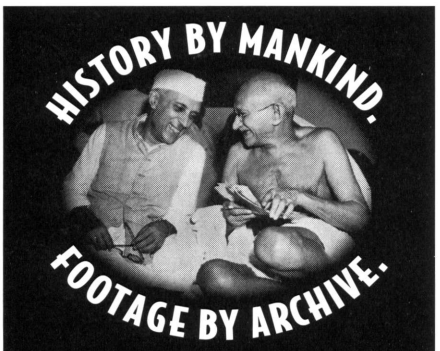

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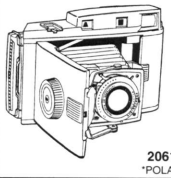

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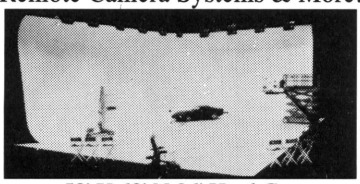

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— Stephen Pizzello, Executive Editor

From the Clubhouse

Yaconelli Inducted into ASC

The ASC's newest member is Los Angeles native Steve Yaconelli. A 1967 graduate of San Diego State's film/TV program, he furthered his cinematic studies overseas at the London School of Film Technique. Upon his return to California, Yaconelli broke into Hollywood as a loader for Columbia Pictures. A year and a half later, after helping Screen Gems' then-head of production to complete a film about the California Yacht Club, Yaconelli became a second assistant on the TV series *Here Comes the Bride*. He soon progressed to first assistant/focus puller on the Warner Bros. series *Nickels,* which starred James Garner. Moving into the feature-film arena, Yaconelli worked as a second-unit assistant cameraman, including a stint as a B-camera focus puller on *Papillon*. He became an assistant to Richard Kline, ASC on the feature *Terminal Man*.

Yaconelli then worked as an operator for 14 years, serving with such ASC members as John Bailey (*Boulevard Nights*, *Cat People*) and William Fraker (*WarGames*, *Protocol*). He became a full-fledged director of photography in 1986 on the low-budget action film *Jackals*, released in the U. S. under the title *American Justice*. His major credits include such telefilms as *The Long Hot Summer*, *Shadow on the Sun*, *Phantom of the Opera* and *Hills Like Elephants*, and the features *Gross Anatomy*, *Karate Kid III*, *The Temp*, *Cabin Boy* and *Blue Sky*, director Tony Richardson's final film. Yaconelli currently serves as director of photography on *Dark Skies*, a new TV series about a government cover-up of an extraterrestrial invasion.

— Andrew Thompson

Dunn and Wray Exchange Kudos

Five years ago, at Cinecon, the annual cinephile convention held in the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel, Linwood Dunn, ASC lectured to an overflow crowd about special effects. As the talk ended, a vivacious lady rushed to the dais, kissed Dunn (to his amazement) and handed him the Cinephile Lifetime Achievement Award for his contributions to motion pictures. The crowd went wild, because the presenter was the legendary Fay Wray, with whom Dunn had worked on the 1933 classic *King Kong*.

This past August, at the 32nd Cinecon, Fay Wray appeared before another standing-room-only crowd at the Roosevelt. At the conclusion of her interview with *American Cinematographer* writer George Turner, Dunn dashed forward, kissed her and presented her with the 1996 Lifetime Achievement Award. Once again, the crowd exploded with enthusiasm. Appropriately, both presentations were made in the Blossom Room, where the first Academy Awards were handed out in 1928. — Jean Turner

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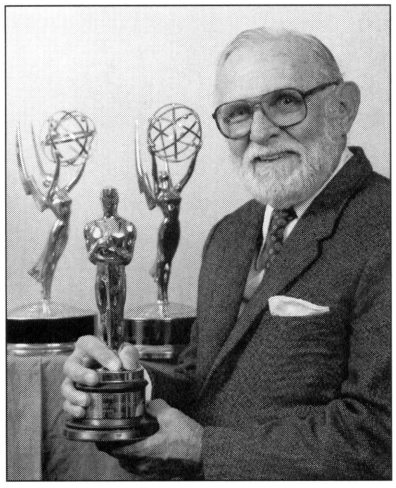

Joseph Biroc, ASC, director of photography for a half-century and member of the American Society of Cinematographers since 1948, died on Sept. 7, 1996, at the age of 93. Biroc earned an Academy Award (along with Fred Koenekamp, ASC) for his work on the 1974 disaster epic *The Towering Inferno,* and was nominated for an Oscar in 1964 for *Hush...Hush Sweet Charlotte.* He also photographed the classic holiday film *It's a Wonderful Life.*

Biroc saw his first movie in 1910 on a vacant lot five blocks from his home. The New York-born youth decided at that very moment that he was going to spend the rest of his life making movies. In 1918, when he was 15 years old, he got a job in the film lab at Paragon Studios in Fort Lee, New Jersey. The following year he moved to Craftsman Labs, which later was merged into Consolidated Film Industries. For about six years he toiled in various film labs in Fort Lee, Long Island and Los Angeles.

At last, in 1925, he was given his chance as an assistant cameraman at Paramount's Long Island Studios. Two years later, he moved to Hollywood and an assistant cameraman's berth at United Artists Studio (now the Warner-Hollywood Studio). In 1929, as talking pictures came to the fore, he became an operative cameraman at RKO Radio Pictures, Inc., a new company established by Radio Corporation of America and the Keith and Orpheum theater circuits at the former Film Booking Office studio. He remained at RKO for most of the next 20 years, operating for many of the leading cinematographers of the day.

Biroc's career began to take off in the Thirties. Although David Abel, ASC is the cinematographer of record for the Fred Astaire-Ginger Rogers musical, *Shall We Dance* (1938), Biroc was the uncredited director of photography for the last five weeks of production. He was also uncredited for *Bombardier* (1942), another five-week stint as the replacement for credited cameraman Nicholas Musuraca, ASC. At the advent of World War II, Biroc entered the U. S. Army, received a commission as captain, and served as a cameraman in the European campaign — one of the first to arrive in liberated Paris.

After the war, Biroc returned to the studios as an operator. He started working for Victor Milner, ASC on *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946), produced by Frank Capra's new independent company, Liberty Films. Milner, however, had another commitment and was replaced temporarily by Joseph Walker, ASC, who had to leave partway through production. Walker — long Capra's favorite cinematographer — suggested that Biroc should finish the picture. This time he received a split credit with Walker. Chock full of highly dramatic moods and superb snow scenes, *It's a Wonderful Life* has since become a classic of Americana, and was cited by Capra as being his personal favorite of his own films. Biroc's work was so successful that Capra signed him to a seven-year contract.

Biroc photographed more than 80 feature films, including *Bwana Devil,* which started the 3-D craze in 1952, and (with Koenekamp) the aforementioned Academy Award-winning *The Towering Inferno* (1974), which set the standard for large-scale disaster movies. Some of his other credits include *Magic Town* (1947), *A Miracle Can Happen* (1947), *Roughshod* (1947), *Nightmare* (1956), *China Gate* (1957), *Run of the Arrow* (1957), *Home Before Dark* (1958), *The FBI Story* (1959), *13 Ghosts* (1960), *The Devil at 4 O'Clock* (1961), *Bye Bye Birdie; Toys in the Attic; Promises, Promises* and *Under the Yum Yum Tree;* the Oscar-nominated *Hush... Hush, Sweet Charlotte* (1964), *I Saw What You Did* (1965), *Flight of the Phoenix* (1966), *The Russians are Coming, the Russians are Coming!* (1966), *Warning Shot* (1967), *Cahill, U. S. Marshal* (1973), *The Longest Yard* (1974), *Hustle* (1975), *The Duchess and the Dirtwater Fox* (1976), *Airplane!* (1980), *Hammett* (1983, with Phil Lathrop, ASC), and *All the Marbles* (1981).

In the late 1940s, Biroc began shooting films for television — pilots, features, series and mini-series. Nominated numerous times, he won Emmys for *Brian's Song* (1972) and *Casablanca* (1983). Among his many TV shows were *Playhouse 90, Checkmate, Four Star Playhouse, Robert Taylor Detectives, Goodyear Theatre, Reader's Digest, Superman, Richard Diamond, Alcoa Theatre, The Hardy Boys, Ghost Story, Little Women, Scruples, The Gambler, Death in California, Outrage,* and numerous pilots.

In 1988, Biroc became the first cinematographer to be honored with the ASC Lifetime Achievement Award.

Biroc is survived by one sister, Agnes Cronmeyer, of Cranford, NJ, and four grandchildren. No funeral services will be held. Memorials should be sent to the Motion Picture and Television Fund, 23300 Ventura Blvd., Woodland Hills, CA 91364. ◆

Above left: *Biroc proudly displays his two Emmys (earned for* Brian's Song *and* Casablanca*) and Academy Award (for* The Towering Inferno*, an honor he shared with Fred Koenekamp, ASC).* Lower right: *Biroc (behind camera) gained experience in the Thirties as an operator and is seen here on the set of a musical starring Fred Astaire.*

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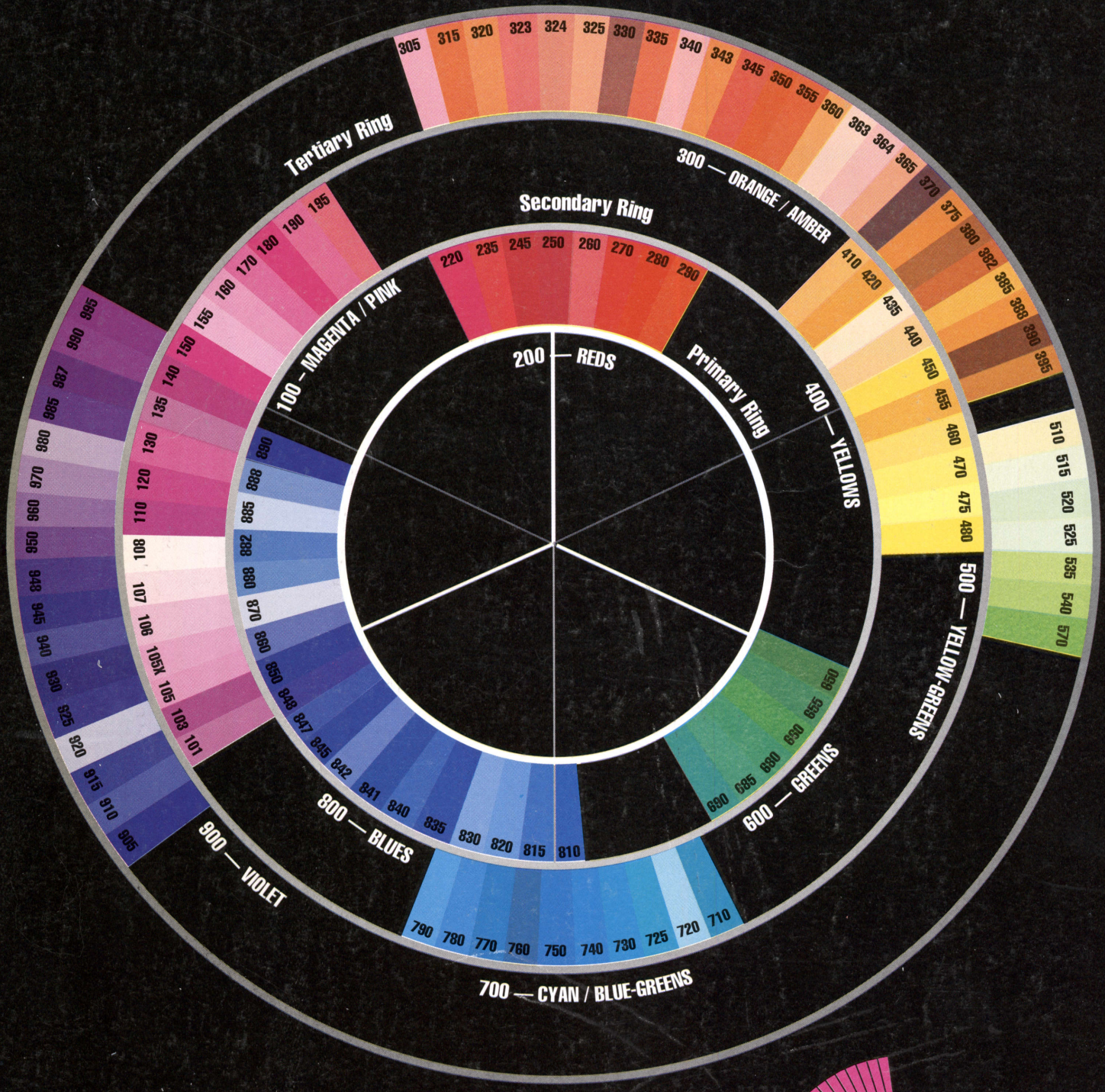

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